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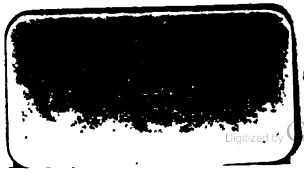

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CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for T. PAYNE and SON at the Mews-Gate, and T. CADELL in the Strand.

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CECILIA.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

An Admonition.

THE Harrels and Mr Arnott waited the return of Cecilia with the utmoſt impatience; ſhe told them with much concern the failure of her embaſſy, which Mr Harrel heard with viſible reſentment and diſcontent, while Mr Arnott, entreating him not to think of it, again made an offer of his ſervices, and declared he would diſregard all perſonal inconvenience for the pleaſure of making him and his ſiſter eaſy.

Cecilia was much mortified that ſhe had not the power to act the ſame part, and aſked Mr Harrel whether he believed his own influence with Mr Briggs would be more ſucceſsful.

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"No, no," answered he, "the old curmudgeon would but the rather refuse. I know his reason, and therefore am sure all pleas will be vain. He has dealings in the alley, and I dare say games with your money as if it were his own. There is, indeed, one way——but I do not think you would like it——though I protest I hardly know why not——however, 'tis as well let alone."

Cecilia insisted upon hearing what he meant, and, after some hesitation, he hinted that there were means, by which, with very little inconvenience, she might borrow the money.

Cecilia, with that horror natural to all unpractised minds at the first idea of contracting a voluntary debt, started at this suggestion, and seemed very ill disposed to listen to it. Mr Harrel, perceiving her repugnance, turned to Mr Arnott, and said, "Well, my good brother, I hardly know how to suffer you to sell out at such a loss, but yet, my present necessity is so urgent.——"

"Don't mention it," cried Mr Arnott; "I am very sorry I let you know it; be certain however, that while I have any thing, it is your's and my sister's."

The two gentlemen were then retiring together; but Cecilia, shocked for Mr Arnott, though unmoved by Mr Harrel, stopt them to enquire what was the way by which

which it was meant she could borrow the money?

Mr Harrel seemed averse to answer, but she would not be refused; and then he mentioned a Jew, of whose honesty he had made undoubted trial, and who, as she was so near being of age, would accept very trifling interest for whatever she should like to take up.

The heart of Cecilia recoiled at the very mention of a *Jew*, and *taking up money upon interest*; but impelled strongly by her own generosity to emulate that of Mr Arnott, she agreed, after some hesitation, to have recourse to this method.

Mr Harrel then made some faint denials, and Mr Arnott protested he had a thousand times rather sell out at any discount, than consent to her taking such a measure; but, when her first reluctance was conquered, all that he urged served but to shew his worthiness in a stronger light, and only encreased her desire of saving him from such repeated imposition.

Her total ignorance in what manner to transact this business, made her next put it wholly into the hands of Mr Harrel, whom she begged to take up 600 *l.* upon such terms as he thought equitable, and to which, whatever they might be, she would sign her name.

He seemed somewhat surprised at the sum,

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but without any queſtion or objection undertook the commiſſion: and Cecilia would not leſſen it, becauſe unwilling to do more for the ſecurity of the luxurious Mr Harrel, than for the diſtreſſes of the laborious Hills.

Nothing could be more ſpeedy than the execution of this affair. Mr Harrel was diligent and expert, the whole was ſettled that morning, and, giving to the Jew her bond for the payment at the intereſt he required, ſhe put into the hands of Mr Harrel 350 *l.* for which he gave his receipt, and ſhe kept the reſt for her own purpoſes.

She intended the morning after this tranſaction to ſettle her account with the bookſeller. When ſhe went into the parlour to breakfaſt, ſhe was ſomewhat ſurpriſed to ſee Mr Harrel ſeated there, in earneſt diſcourſe with his wife. Fearful of interrupting a tête à tête ſo uncommon, ſhe would have retired, but Mr Harrel, calling after her, ſaid, "O pray come in! I am only telling Priſcilla a piece of my uſual ill luck. You muſt know I happen to be in immediate want of 200 *l.* though only for three or four days, and I ſent to order honeſt old Aaron to come hither directly with the money; but it ſo happens that he went out of town the moment he had done with us yeſterday, and will not be back again this week. Now I don't believe there is another Jew in the king-

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kingdom who will let me have money upon the ſame terms: they are ſuch notorious raſcals, that I hate the very thought of employing them."

Cecilia, who could not but underſtand what this meant, was too much diſpleaſed both by his extravagance and his indelicacy, to feel at all inclined to change the deſtination of the money ſhe had juſt received; and therefore coolly agreed that it was unfortunate, but added nothing more.

"O, it is provoking indeed," cried he, "for the extra-intereſt I muſt pay one of thoſe extortioners is abſolutely ſo much money thrown away."

Cecilia, ſtill without noticing theſe hints, began her breakfaſt. Mr Harrel then ſaid he would take his tea with them; and, while he was buttering ſome dry toaſt, exclaimed, as if from ſudden recollection, "O Lord, now I think of it, I believe, Miſs Beverley, you can lend me this money yourſelf for a day or two. The moment old Aaron comes to town, I will pay you."

Cecilia, whoſe generoſity, however extenſive, was neither thoughtleſs nor indiſcriminate, found ſomething ſo repulſive in this groſs procedure, that inſtead of aſſenting to his requeſt with her uſual alacrity, ſhe anſwered very gravely, that the money ſhe had juſt received was already appropriated to a

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particular purpoſe, and ſhe knew not how to defer making uſe of it.

Mr Harrel was extremely chagrined by this reply, which was by no means what he expected; but, toſſing down a diſh of tea, he began humming an air, and ſoon recovered his uſual unconcern.

In a few minutes, ringing his bell, he deſired a ſervant to go to Mr Zackery, and inform him that he wanted to ſpeak with him immediately.

"And now," ſaid he, with a look in which vexation ſeemed ſtruggling with careleſſneſs, "the thing is done! I don't like, indeed, to get into ſuch hands, for 'tis hard ever to get out of them, when once one begins,—and hitherto I have kept pretty clear. But there is no help for it—Mr Arnott cannot juſt now aſſiſt me—and ſo the thing muſt take its courſe. Priſcilla, why do you look ſo grave?"

"I am thinking how unlucky it is my Brother ſhould happen to be unable to lend you this money."

"O, don't think about it; I ſhall get rid of the man very ſoon, I dare ſay; I ſhall pay him off in a very few days,—I hope ſo, at leaſt——I am ſure I mean it."

Cecilia now grew a little diſturbed; ſhe looked at Mrs Harrel, who ſeemed alſo uneaſy, and then, with ſome heſitation, ſaid,

"Have

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"Have you really never, Sir, employed this man before?"

"Never in my life: never any but old Aaron. I dread the whole race; I have a ſort of ſuperſtitious notion that if once I get into their clutches, I ſhall never be my own man again; and that induced me to beg your aſſiſtance. However, 'tis no great matter."

She then began to waver; ſhe feared there might be future miſchief as well as preſent inconvenience, in his applying to new uſurers, and knowing ſhe had now the power to prevent him, thought herſelf half cruel in refuſing to exert it. She wiſhed to conſult Mr Monckton, but found it neceſſary to take her meaſures immediately, as the Jew was already ſent for, and muſt in a few moments be either employed or diſcarded.

Much perplext how to act, between a deſire of doing good, and a fear of encouraging evil, ſhe weighed each ſide haſtily, but while ſtill uncertain which ought to preponderate, her kindneſs for Mrs Harrel interfered, and, in the hope of reſcuing her huſband from further bad practices, ſhe ſaid ſhe would poſtpone her own buſineſs for the few days he mentioned, rather than ſee him compelled to open any new account with ſo dangerous a ſet of men.

He thanked her in his uſual negligent manner, and accepting the 200 *l.* gave her

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his receipt for it, and a promiſe ſhe ſhould be paid in a week.

Mrs Harrel, however, ſeemed more grateful, and with many embraces ſpoke her ſenſe of this friendly good-nature. Cecilia, happy from believing ſhe had revived in her ſome ſpark of ſenſibility, determined to avail herſelf of ſo favourable a ſymptom, and enter at once upon the diſagreeable talk ſhe had ſet herſelf, of repreſenting to her the danger of her preſent ſituation.

As ſoon, therefore, as breakfaſt was done, and Mr Arnott, who came in before it was over, was gone, with a view to excite her attention by raiſing her curioſity, ſhe begged the favour of a private conference in her own room, upon matters of ſome importance.

She began with hoping that the friendſhip in which they had ſo long lived would make her pardon the liberty ſhe was going to take, and which nothing leſs than their former intimacy, joined to ſtrong apprehenſions for her future welfare, could authoriſe; "But oh Priſcilla!" ſhe continued, "with open eyes to ſee your danger, yet not warn you of it, would be a reſerve treacherous in a friend, and cruel even in a fellow-creature."

"What danger?" cried Mrs Harrel, much alarmed, "do you think me ill? do I look conſumptive?"

"Yes,

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"Yes, consumptive indeed!" said Cecilia, "but not, I hope, in your constitution."

And then, with all the tenderness in her power, she came to the point, and conjured her without delay to retrench her expences, and change her thoughtless way of life for one more considerate and domestic.

Mrs Harrel with much simplicity, assured her *she did nothing but what every body else did*, and that it was quite impossible for her to *appear in the world* in any other manner.

"But how are you to appear hereafter?" cried Cecilia, "if now you live beyond your income, you must consider that, in time, your income by such depredations will be exhausted."

"But I declare to you," answered Mrs Harrel, "I never run in debt for more than half a year, for as soon as I receive my own money, I generally pay it away every shilling: and so borrow what I want till pay day comes round again."

"And that," said Cecilia, "seems a method expressly devised for keeping you eternally comfortless: pardon me, however, for speaking so openly, but I fear Mr Harrel himself must be even still less attentive and accurate in his affairs, or he could not so frequently be embarrassed. And what is to be the result? look but, my dear Priscilla, a little forward, and you will tremble at the prospect before you!"

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Mrs Harrel seemed frightened at this speech, and begged to know what she would have them do?

Cecilia then, with equal wisdom and friendliness, proposed a general reform in the household, the public and private expences of both: she advised that a strict examination might be made into the state of their affairs, that all their bills should be called in, and faithfully paid, and that an entire new plan of life should be adopted, according to the situation of their fortune and income when cleared of all incumbrances.

"Lord, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs Harrel, with a look of astonishment, "why Mr Harrel would no more do all this than fly! If I was only to make such a proposal, I dare say he would laugh in my face."

"And why?"

"Why?—why because it would seem such an odd thing—it's what nobody thinks of—though I am sure I am very much obliged to you for mentioning it.—Shall we go down stairs? I think I heard somebody come in."

"No matter who comes in," said Cecilia, "reflect for a moment upon my proposal, and at least, if you disapprove it, suggest something more eligible."

"O, it's a very good proposal, that I agree," said Mrs Harrel, looking very weary,

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weary, "but only the thing is, it's quite impoſſible."

"Why ſo? why is it impoſſible?"

"Why becauſe—dear, I don't know—but I am ſure it is."

"But what is your reaſon? What makes you ſure of it?"

"Lord, I can't tell—but I know it is—becauſe—I am very certain it is."

Argument ſuch as this, though extremely fatiguing to the underſtanding of Cecilia, had yet no power to *blunt her purpoſe:* ſhe warmly expoſtulated againſt the weakneſs of her defence, ſtrongly repreſented the imprudence of her conduct, and exhorted her by every tie of juſtice, honour and diſcretion to ſet about a reformation.

"Why what can I do?" cried Mrs Harrel, impatiently, "one muſt live a little like other people. You would not have me be ſtared at, I ſuppoſe; and I am ſure I don't know what I do that every body elſe does not do too."

"But were it not better," ſaid Cecilia, with more energy, "to think leſs of *other people*, and more of *yourſelf?* to conſult your own fortune, and your own ſituation in life, inſtead of being blindly guided by thoſe of *other people?* If, indeed, *other people* would be reſponſible for your loſſes, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the diſorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make their

their way of life the example of yours; but you cannot flatter yourſelf ſuch will be the caſe; you know better; your loſſes, your diminiſhed fortune, your embarraſſed circumſtances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by ſome, but blamed by more, and aſſiſted by none!"

"Good Lord, Miſs Beverley!" cried Mrs Harrel, ſtarting, "you talk juſt as if we were ruined!"

"I mean not that," replied Cecilia, "but I would fain, by pointing out your danger, prevail with you to prevent in time ſo dreadful a cataſtrophe."

Mrs Harrel, more affronted than alarmed, heard this anſwer with much diſpleaſure, and after a ſullen heſitation, peeviſhly ſaid, "I muſt own I don't take it very kind of you to ſay ſuch frightful things to me: I am ſure we only live like the reſt of the world, and I don't ſee why a man of Mr Harrel's fortune ſhould live any worſe. As to his having now and then a little debt or two, it is nothing but what every body elſe has. You only think it ſo odd, becauſe you a'n't uſed to it: but you are quite miſtaken if you ſuppoſe he does not mean to pay, for he told me this morning, that as ſoon as ever he receives his rents, he intends to diſcharge every bill he has in the world."

"I am very glad to hear it," anſwered Cecilia, "and I heartily wiſh he may have the

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the resolution to adhere to his purpose. I feared you would think me impertinent, but you do worse in believing me unkind: friendship and good-will could alone have induced me to hazard what I have said to you. I must, however, have done; though I cannot forbear adding that I hope what has already passed will sometimes recur to you."

They then separated; Mrs Harrel half angry at remonstrances she thought only censorious, and Cecilia offended at her pettishness and folly, though grieved at her blindness.

She was soon, however, recompensed for this vexation by a visit from Mrs Delvile, who, finding her alone, sat with her some time, and by her spirit, understanding, and elegance, dissipated all her chagrin.

From another circumstance, also, she received much pleasure, though a little perplexity; Mr Arnott brought her word that Mr Belfield, almost quite well, had actually left his lodgings, and was gone into the country.

She now half suspected that the account of his illness given her by young Delvile, was merely the effect of his curiosity to discover her sentiments of him; yet when she considered how foreign to his character appeared every species of artifice, she exculpated him from the design, and concluded that the impatient spirit of Belfield had hurried

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ried him away, when really unfit for travelling. She had no means, however, to hear more of him now he had quitted the town, and therefore, though uneasy, she was compelled to be patient.

In the evening she had again a visit from Mr Monckton, who, though he was now acquainted how much she was at home, had the forbearance to avoid making frequent use of that knowledge, that his attendance might escape observation.

Cecilia, as usual, spoke to him of all her affairs with the utmost openness; and as her mind was now chiefly occupied by her apprehensions for the Harrels, she communicated to him the extravagance of which they were guilty, and hinted at the distress that from time to time it occasioned; but the assistance she had afforded them her own delicacy prevented her mentioning.

Mr Monckton scrupled not from this account instantly to pronounce Harrel a *ruined man;* and thinking Cecilia, from her connection with him, in much danger of being involved in his future difficulties, he most earnestly exhorted her to suffer no inducement to prevail with her to advance him any money, confidently affirming she would have little chance of being ever repaid.

Cecilia listened to this charge with much alarm, but readily promised future circumspection. She confessed to him the conference

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ference she had had in the morning with Mrs Harrel, and after lamenting her determined neglect of her affairs, she added, "I cannot but own that my esteem for her, even more than my affection, has lessened almost every day since I have been in her house; but this morning when I ventured to speak to her with earnestness, I found her powers of reasoning so weak, and her infatuation to luxury and expence so strong, that I have ever since felt ashamed of my own want of discernment, in having formerly selected her for my friend."

"When you gave her that title," said Mr Monckton, "you had little choice in your power; her sweetness and good nature attracted you; childhood is never troubled with foresight, and youth is seldom difficult: she was lively and pleasing, you were generous and affectionate; your acquaintance with her was formed while you were yet too young to know your own worth; your fondness of her grew from habit; and before the inferiority of her parts had weakened your regard, by offending your judgment, her early marriage separated you from her entirely. But now you meet again the scene is altered; three years of absence spent in the cultivation of an understanding naturally of the first order, by encreasing your wisdom, has made you more fastidious; while the same time spent by her in mere idleness and shew,

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ſhew, has hurt her diſpoſition, without adding to her knowledge, and robbed her of her natural excellencies, without enriching her with acquired ones. You ſee her now with impartiality, for you ſee her almoſt as a ſtranger, and all thoſe deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her ſuperficial acquaintance with the world, have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all bands; remember, therefore, if you would form a ſolid friendſhip, to conſult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the underſtanding."

"Well, then," ſaid Cecilia, "at leaſt it muſt be confeſſed I have judiciouſly choſen *you!*"

"You have, indeed, done me the higheſt honour," he anſwered.

They then talked of Belfield, and Mr Monckton confirmed the account of Mr Arnott, that he had left London in good health. After which, he enquired if ſhe had ſeen any thing more of the Delviles?

"Yes," ſaid Cecilia, "Mrs Delvile called upon me this morning. She is a delightful woman; I am ſorry you know her not enough to do her juſtice."

"Is ſhe civil to you?"

"Civil? ſhe is all kindneſs!"

"Then depend upon it ſhe has ſomething in view: whenever that is not the caſe, ſhe is all

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all insolence. And Mr Delvile—pray what do you think of him?"

"O, I think him insufferable! and I cannot sufficiently thank your for that timely caution which prevented my change of habitation. I would not live under the same roof with him for the world!"

"Well, and do you not now begin also to see the son properly?"

"Properly! I don't understand you."

"Why as the very son of such parents, haughty and impertinent."

"No, indeed; he has not the smallest resemblance of his father, and if he resembles his mother, it is only what every one must wish who impartially sees her."

"You know not that family. But how, indeed, should you, when they are in a combination to prevent your getting that knowledge? They have all their designs upon you, and if you are not carefully upon your guard, you will be the dupe to them?"

"What can you possibly mean?"

"Nothing but what every body else must immediately see; they have a great share of pride, and a small one of wealth; you seem by fortune to be flung in their way, and doubtless they mean not to neglect so inviting an opportunity of repairing their estates."

"Indeed you are mistaken; I am certain they have no such intentions on the contrary, they

they all even teazingly perſiſt in thinking me already engaged elſewhere."

She then gave him a hiſtory of their ſeveral ſuſpicions, "The impertinence of report," ſhe added, "has ſo much convinced them that Sir Robert Floyer and Mr Belfield fought merely as rivals, that I can only clear myſelf of partiality for one of them, to have it inſtantly concluded I feel it for the other. And, far from ſeeming hurt that I appear to be diſpoſed of, Mr Delvile openly ſeconds the pretenſions of Sir Robert, and his ſon officiouſly perſuades me that I am already Mr Belfield's."

"Tricks, nothing but tricks to diſcover your real ſituation."

He then gave her ſome general cautions to be upon her guard againſt their artifices, and changing the ſubject, talked, for the reſt of his viſit, upon matters of general entertainment.

CHAP.

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CHAP. II.

An Evasion.

CECILIA now for about a fortnight passed her time without incident: the Harrels continued their accustomed dissipation, Sir Robert Floyer, without even seeking a private conference, persevered in his attentions, and Mr Arnott, though still silent and humble, seemed only to live by the pleasure of beholding her. She spent two whole days with Mrs Delvile, both of which served to confirm her admiration of that lady and of her son; and she joined the parties of the Harrels, or stayed quietly at home, according to her spirits and inclinations: while she was visited by Mr Monckton often enough to satisfy him, with her proceedings, yet too seldom to betray either to herself or to the world any suspicion of his designs.

Her 200 *l.* however, which was to have been returned at the end of the first week, though a fortnight had now elapsed, had not even been mentioned: she began to grow very impatient, but not knowing what course to pursue, and wanting courage to remind Mr Harrel of his promise, she still waited the performance of it without speaking.

At

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At this time, preparations were making in the family for removing to Violet Bank to ſpend the Eaſter holidays: but Cecilia, who was too much grieved at ſuch perpetual encreaſe of unneceſſary expences to have any enjoyment in new proſpects of entertainment, had at preſent ſome buſineſs of her own which gave her full employment.

The poor carpenter, whoſe family ſhe had taken under her protection, was juſt dead, and, as ſoon as the laſt duties had been paid him, ſhe ſent for his widow, and after trying to conſole her for the loſs ſhe had ſuffered, aſſured her ſhe was immediately ready to fulfil the engagement into which ſhe had entered, of aſſiſting her to undertake ſome better method of procuring a livelihood; and therefore deſired to know in what manner ſhe could ſerve her, and what ſhe thought herſelf able to do.

The good woman, pouring forth thanks and praiſes innumerable, anſwered that ſhe had a couſin, who had offered, for a certain premium, to take her into partnerſhip in a ſmall haberdaſher's ſhop. "But then, madam," continued ſhe, "it's quite morally impoſſible I ſhould raiſe ſuch a ſum, or elſe, to be ſure, ſuch a ſhop as that, now I am grown ſo poorly, would be quite a heaven upon earth to me: for my ſtrength, madam, is almoſt all gone away, and when I do any hard work, it's quite a piteous ſight to ſee me,

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me, for I am all in a tremble after it, juſt as if I had an ague, and yet all the time my hands, madam, will be burning like a coal!"

"You have indeed been overworked," ſaid Cecilia, "and it is high time your feeble frame ſhould have ſome reſt. What is the ſum your couſin demands?"

"O madam, more than I ſhould be able to get together in all my life! for earn what I will, it goes as faſt as it comes, becauſe there's many mouths, and ſmall pay, and two of the little ones that can't help at all; —and there's no Billy, madam, to work for us now!"

"But tell me, what is the ſum?"

"Sixty pound, madam."

"You ſhall have it!" cried the generous Cecilia, "if the ſituation will make you happy, I will give it you myſelf."

The poor woman wept her thanks, and was long before ſhe could ſufficiently compoſe herſelf to anſwer the further queſtions of Cecilia, who next enquired what could be done with the children? Mrs Hill, however, hitherto hopeleſs of ſuch a proviſion for herſelf, had for them formed no plan. She told her, therefore, to go to her couſin, and conſult upon this ſubject, as well as to make preparations for her own removal.

The arrangement of this buſineſs now became her favourite occupation. She went herſelf to the ſhop, which was a very ſmall one

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one in Fetter-lane, and ſpoke with Mrs. Roberts, the couſin; who agreed to take the eldeſt girl, now ſixteen years of age, by way of helper; but ſaid ſhe had room for no other: however, upon Cecilia's offering to raiſe the premium, ſhe conſented that the two little children ſhould alſo live in the houſe, where they might be under the care of their mother and ſiſter.

There were ſtill two others to be diſpoſed of; but as no immediate method of providing for them occurred to Cecilia, ſhe determined, for the preſent, to place them in ſome cheap ſchool, where they might be taught plain work, which could not but prove a uſeful qualification for whatever ſort of buſineſs they might hereafter attempt.

Her plan was to beſtow upon Mrs. Hill and her children 100*l.* by way of putting them all into a decent way of living; and then, from time to time, to make them ſuch ſmall preſents as their future exigencies or changes of ſituation might require.

Now, therefore, payment from Mr Harrel became immediately neceſſary, for ſhe had only 50*l.* of the 600*l.* ſhe had taken up in her own poſſeſſion, and her cuſtomary allowance was already ſo appropriated that ſhe could make from it no conſiderable deduction.

There is nothing in the ſight of laborious indigence ſo affecting and ſo reſpectable,

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table, that it renders dissipation peculiarly contemptible, and doubles the odium of extravagance; every time Cecilia saw this poor family, her aversion to the conduct and the principles of Mr Hartel encreased, while her delicacy of shocking or shaming him diminished, and she soon acquired for them what she had failed to acquire for herself, the spirit and resolution to claim her debt.

One morning, therefore, as he was quitting the breakfast-room, she hastily arose, and following, begged to have a moment's discourse with him. They went together to the library, and after some apologies, and much hesitation, she told him she fancied he had forgotten the 200*l.* which she had lent him.

"The 200*l.*" cried he; "O, ay, true! —I protest it had escaped me. Well, but you don't want it immediately?"

"Indeed I do, if you can conveniently spare it."

"O yes, certainly!—without the least doubt!—Though now I think of it—it's extremely unlucky, but really just at this time—why did not you put me in mind of it before?"

"I hoped you would have remembered it yourself?"

"I could have paid you two days ago extremely well;—however, you shall certainly have it very soon, that you may de-

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pend upon, and a day or two can make no great difference to you."

He then wiſhed her good morning, and left her.

Cecilia very much provoked, regretted that ſhe had ever lent it at all, and determined for the future ſtrictly to follow the advice of Mr Monckton in truſting him no more.

Two or three days paſſed on, but ſtill no notice was taken either of the payment or of the debt. She then reſolved to renew her application, and be more ſerious and more urgent with him; but ſhe found, to her utter ſurpriſe, this was not in her power, and that though ſhe lived under the ſame roof with him, ſhe had no opportunity to enforce her claim. Mr Harrel, whenever ſhe deſired to ſpeak with him, proteſted he was ſo much hurried he had not a moment to ſpare: and even when, tired of his excuſes, ſhe purſued him out of the room, he only quickened his ſpeed, ſmiling, however, and bowing, and calling out "I am vaſtly ſorry, but I am ſo late now I cannot ſtop an inſtant; however, as ſoon as I come back, I ſhall be wholly at your command."

When he came back, however, Sir Robert Floyer, or ſome other gentleman, was ſure to be with him, and the difficulties of obtaining an audience were ſure to be encreaſed. And by this method, which he conſtantly

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conſtantly practiſed, of avoiding any private converſation, he fruſtrated all her ſchemes of remonſtrating upon his delay, ſince her reſentment, however great, could never urge her to the indelicacy of dunning him in preſence of a third perſon.

She was now much perplext herſelf how to put into execution her plan for the Hills: ſhe knew it would be as vain to apply for money to Mr Briggs, as for payment to Mr Harrel. Her word, however, had been given, and her word ſhe held ſacred: ſhe reſolved, therefore, for the preſent, to beſtow upon them the 50 *l.* ſhe ſtill retained, and, if the reſt ſhould be neceſſary before ſhe became of age, to ſpare it, however inconveniently, from her private allowance, which, by the will of her uncle, was 500 *l.* a-year, 250 *l.* of which Mr Harrel received for her board and accommodations.

Having ſettled this matter in her own mind, ſhe went to the lodging of Mrs Hill, in order to conclude the affair. She found her and all her children, except the youngeſt, hard at work, and their honeſt induſtry ſo much ſtrengthened her compaſſion, that her wiſhes for ſerving them grew every inſtant more liberal.

Mrs Hill readily undertook to make her couſin accept half the premium for the preſent, which would ſuffice to fix her, with three of her children, in the ſhop: Cecilia

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then went with her to Fetter-lane, and there drawing up herself an agreement for their entering into partnership, she made each of them sign it and take a copy, and kept a third in her own possession: after which, she gave a promissory note to Mrs Roberts for the rest of the money.

She presented Mrs. Hill also, with 10*l.* to clothe them all decently, and enable her to send two of the children to school; and assured her that she would herself pay for their board and instruction, till she should be established in her business, and have power to save money for that purpose.

She then put herself into a chair to return home, followed by the prayers and blessings of the whole family.

CHAP. III.

An Adventure.

NEVER had the heart of Cecilia felt so light, so gay, so glowing, as after the transaction of this affair: her life had never appeared to her so important, nor her wealth so valuable. To see five helpless children provided

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provided for by herſelf, reſcued from the extremes of penury and wretchedneſs, and put in a way to become uſeful to ſociety, and comfortable to themſelves; to behold their feeble mother, ſnatched from the hardſhip of that labour which, over-powering her ſtrength, had almoſt deſtroyed her exiſtence, now placed in a ſituation where a competent maintenance might be earned without fatigue, and the remnant of her days paſs in eaſy employment—to view ſuch ſights, and have power to ſay, "*Theſe deeds are mine!*" what, to a diſpoſition fraught with tenderneſs and benevolence, could give purer ſelf-applauſe, or more exquiſite ſatisfaction!

Such were the pleaſures which regaled the reflections of Cecilia, when, in her way home, having got out of her chair to walk through the upper part of Oxford-Street, ſhe was ſuddenly met by the old gentleman whoſe emphatical addreſſes to her had ſo much excited her aſtoniſhment.

He was paſſing quick on, but ſtopping the moment he perceived her, he ſternly called out, "Are you proud? are you callous? are you hard of heart ſo ſoon!"

"Put me, if you pleaſe, to ſome trial?" cried Cecilia, with the virtuous courage of a ſelf-acquitting conſcience.

"I already have!" returned he, indignantly, "and already I have found you faulty!"

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"I am ſorry to hear it," ſaid the amazed Cecilia; "but at leaſt I hope you will tell me in what?"

"You refuſed me admittance," he anſwered, "yet I was your friend, yet I was willing to prolong the term of your genuine tranquility! I pointed out to you a method of preſerving peace with your own ſoul; I came to you in behalf of the poor, and inſtructed you how to merit their prayers; you heard me, you were ſuſceptible, you complied! I meant to have repeated the leſſon, to have turned your whole heart to compaſſion, and to have taught you the ſad duties of ſympathiſing humanity. For this purpoſe I called again, but again I was not admitted! Short was the period of my abſence, yet long enough for the completion of your downfall!"

"Good heaven," cried Cecilia, "how dreadful is this language! when have you called, Sir? I never heard you had been at the houſe. Far from refuſing you admittance, I wiſhed to ſee you."

"Indeed!" cried he, with ſome ſoftneſs, "and are you, in truth, not proud? not callous? not hard of heart? Follow me, then, and viſit the humble and the poor, follow me, and give comfort to the fallen and dejected!"

At this invitation, however deſirous to do good, Cecilia ſtarted; the ſtrangeneſs of

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the inviter, his flightineſs, his authoritative manner, and the uncertainty whither or to whom he might carry her, made her fearful of proceeding: yet a benevolent curioſity to ſee as well as ſerve the objects of his recommendation, joined to the eagerneſs of youthful integrity to clear her own character from the aſperſion of hard-heartedneſs, ſoon conquered her irreſolution, and, making a ſign to her ſervant to keep near her, ſhe followed as her conductor led.

He went on ſilently and ſolemnly till he came to Swallow Street, then turning into it, he ſtopt at a ſmall and mean-looking houſe, knocked at the door, and without aſking any queſtion of the man who opened it, beckoned her to come after him, and haſtened up ſome narrow winding ſtairs.

Cecilia again heſitated; but when ſhe recollected that this old man, though little known, was frequently ſeen, and though with few people acquainted, was by many perſonally recognized, ſhe thought it impoſſible he could mean her any injury. She ordered her ſervant, however, to come in, and bid him keep walking up and down the ſtairs till ſhe returned to him. And then ſhe obeyed the directions of her guide.

He proceeded till he came to the ſecond floor, then, again beckoning her to follow him, he opened a door, and entered a ſmall and very meanly furniſhed apartment.

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And here, to her infinite aſtoniſhment, ſhe perceived, employed in waſhing ſome china, a very lovely young woman, genteely dreſſed and appearing hardly ſeventeen years of age.

The moment they came in, with evident marks of confuſion, ſhe inſtantly gave over her work, haſtily putting the baſon ſhe was waſhing upon the table, and endeavouring to hide the towel with which ſhe was wiping it behind her chair.

The old gentleman, advancing to her with quickneſs, ſaid, "How is he now? is he better? will he live!

"Heaven forbid he ſhould not!" anſwered the young woman with emotion, "but, indeed, he is no better!"

"Look here," ſaid he pointing to Cecilia, "I have brought you one who has power to ſerve you, and to relieve your diſtreſs: one who is rolling in affluence, a ſtranger to ill, a novice in the world;—unſkilled in the miſeries ſhe is yet to endure, unconſcious of the depravity into which ſhe is to ſink!—Receive her benefactions while yet ſhe is untainted, ſatisfied that while ſhe aids you, ſhe is bleſſing herſelf!"

The young woman, bluſhing and abaſhed, ſaid, "You are very good to me, Sir, but there is no occaſion—there is no need—I have not any neceſſity—I am far from being ſo very much in want.—"

"Poor ſimple ſoul!" interrupted the old man,

man, "and art thou aſhamed of poverty? Guard, guard thyſelf from other ſhames, and the wealthieſt may envy thee! Tell here thy ſtory, plainly, roundly, truly; abate nothing of thy indigence, repreſs nothing of her liberality. The Poor, not impoveriſhed by their own Guilt, are Equals of the Affluent, not enriched by their own virtue. Come, then, and let me preſent ye to each other! young as ye both are, with many years and many ſorrows to encounter, lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-ſoothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!"

He then took a hand of each, and joining them between his own, "*You*," he continued, "who though rich, are not hardened, and *you*, who though poor, are not debaſed, why ſhould ye not love, why ſhould ye not cheriſh each other? The afflictions of life are tedious, its joys are evaneſcent; ye are now both young, and with little to enjoy, will find much to ſuffer. Ye are both, too, I believe, innocent—Oh could ye always remain ſo!—Cherubs were ye then, and the ſons of men might worſhip you!"

He ſtopt, checked by his own riſing emotion; but ſoon reſuming his uſual auſterity, "Such, however," he continued, "is not the condition of humanity; in pity, therefore, to the evils impending over both, be kind to each other! I leave you together,

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and to your mutual tenderneſs I recommend you!"

Then, turning particularly to Cecilia, "Diſdain not," he ſaid, "to conſole the depreſſed; look upon her without ſcorn, converſe with her without contempt: like you, ſhe is an Orphan, though not, like you, an Heireſs;—like her you are fatherleſs, though not like her friendleſs? If *ſhe* is awaited by the temptations of adverſity, *you*, alſo, are ſurrounded by the corruptions of proſperity. Your fall is moſt probable, her's moſt excuſable;—commiſerate *her* therefore now,—by and by ſhe may commiſerate *you!*"

And with theſe words he left the room.

A total ſilence for ſome time ſucceeded his departure: Cecilia found it difficult to recover from the ſurpriſe into which ſhe had been thrown ſufficiently for ſpeech: in following her extraordinary director, her imagination had painted to her a ſcene ſuch as ſhe had ſo lately quitted, and prepared her to behold ſome family in diſtreſs, ſome helpleſs creature in ſickneſs, or ſome children in want; but of theſe to ſee none, to meet but one perſon, and that one fair, young, and delicate,—an introduction ſo ſingular to an object ſo unthought of, deprived her of all power but that of ſhewing her amazement.

Mean while the young woman looked ſcarcely leſs ſurpriſed, and infinitely more embarraſſed. She ſurveyed her apartment with

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with vexation, and her gueſt with confuſion; ſhe had liſtened to the exhortation of the old man with viſible uneaſineſs, and now he was gone, ſeemed overwhelmed with ſhame and chagrin.

Cecilia, who in obſerving theſe emotions felt both her curioſity and her compaſſion encreaſe, preſſed her hand as ſhe parted with it, and, when a little recovered, ſaid, "You muſt think this a ſtrange intruſion; but the gentleman who brought me hither is perhaps ſo well known to you, as to make his ſingularities plead with you their own apology."

"No, indeed, madam," ſhe anſwered baſhfully, "he is very little known to me; but he is very good, and very deſirous to do me ſervice:—not but what I believe he thinks me much worſe off than I really am, for, I aſſure you, madam, whatever he has ſaid, I am not ill off at all—hardly."

The various doubts to her diſadvantage which had at firſt, from her uncommon ſituation, ariſen in the mind of Cecilia, this anxiety to diſguiſe, not diſplay her diſtreſs, conſiderably removed, ſince it cleared her of all ſuſpicion of ſeeking by artifice and impoſition to play upon her feelings.

With a gentleneſs, therefore, the moſt ſoothing, ſhe replied, "I ſhould by no means have broken in upon you thus unexpectedly, if I had not concluded my conductor had ſome right to bring me. However, ſince we

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are actually met, let us remember his injunctions, and endeavour not to part, till, by a mutual exchange of good-will, each has added a friend to the other."

"You are condescending indeed, madam," answered the young woman, with an air the most humble, "looking as you look, to talk of a friend when you come to such a place as this? up two pair of stairs! no furniture! no servant! every thing in such disorder!—indeed I wonder at Mr Albany! he should not——but he thinks every body's affairs may be made public, and does not care what he tells, nor who hears him;—he knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do."

"I am very much concerned," cried Cecilia, more and more surprised at all she heard, "to find I have been thus instrumental to distressing you. I was ignorant whither I was coming, and followed him, believe me, neither from curiosity nor inclination, but simply because I knew not how to refuse him. He is gone, however, and I will therefore relieve you by going too: but permit me to leave behind me a small testimony that the intention of my coming was not mere impertinence."

She then took out her purse; but the young woman, starting back with a look of resentful mortification, exclaimed, "No, madam! you are quite mistaken; pray put up

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up your purse; I am no beggar! Mr Albany has misrepresented me, if he has told you I am."

Cecilia, mortified in her turn at this unexpected rejection of an offer she had thought herself invited to make, stood some moments silent; and then said, "I am far from meaning to offend you, and I sincerely beg your pardon if I have misunderstood the charge just now given to me."

"I have nothing to pardon, madam," said she, more calmly, "except, indeed, to Mr Albany; and to him, 'tis of no use to be angry, for he minds not what I say; he is very good, but he is very strange, for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor should ask, and every one who is rich should give; he does not know that there are many who would rather starve."

"And are you," said Cecilia, half-smiling, "of that number?"

"No, indeed, madam! I have not so much greatness of mind. But those to whom I belong have more fortitude and higher spirit. I wish I could imitate them!"

Struck with the candour and simplicity of this speech, Cecilia now felt a warm desire to serve her, and taking her hand, said, "Forgive me; but though I see you wish me gone, I know not how to leave you: recollect, therefore, the charge that has been given

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give to us both, and if you refuſe my aſſiſtance one way, point out to me in what other I may offer it."

"You are very kind, madam," ſhe anſwered, "and I dare ſay you are very good; I am ſure you look ſo at leaſt. But I want nothing; I do very well, and I have hopes of doing better. Mr Albany is too impatient. He knows, indeed, that I am not extremely rich, but he is much to blame if he ſuppoſes me therefore an object of charity, and thinks me ſo mean as to receive money from a ſtranger."

"I am truly ſorry," cried Cecilia, "for the error I have committed, but you muſt ſuffer me to make my peace with you before we part; yet, till I am better known to you, I am fearful of propoſing terms. Perhaps you will permit me to leave you my direction, and do me the favour to call upon me yourſelf?"

"O no, madam! I have a ſick relation whom I cannot leave: and indeed, if he were well, he would not like to have me make an acquaintance while I am in this place."

"I hope you are not his only nurſe? I am ſure you do not look able to bear ſuch fatigue. Has he a phyſician? Is he properly attended?"

"No, madam; he has no phyſician, and no attendance at all!"

"And

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"And is it poſſible that in ſuch a ſituation you can refuſe to be aſſiſted? Surely you ſhould accept ſome help for him, if not for yourſelf."

"But what will that ſignify, when, if I do, he will not make uſe of it? and when he had a thouſand and a thouſand times rather die, than let any one know he is in want?"

"Take it, then, unknown to him; ſerve him without acquainting him you ſerve him. Surely you would not ſuffer him to periſh without aid?"

"Heaven forbid! But what can I do? I am under his command, madam, not he under mine!"

"Is he your father?——Pardon my queſtion, but your youth ſeems much to want ſuch a protector."

"No, madam, I have no father! I was happier when I had! He is my brother."

"And what is his illneſs?"

"A fever."

"A fever, and without a phyſician! Are you ſure, too, it is not infectious?"

"O yes, too ſure!"

"Too ſure? how ſo?"

"Becauſe I know too well the occaſion of it!"

"And what is the occaſion?" cried Cecilia, again taking her hand, "pray truſt me; indeed you ſhall not repent your confidence,

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dence. Your reſerve hitherto has only raiſed you in my eſteem, but do not carry it ſo far as to mortify me by a total rejection of my good offices."

"Ah madam!" ſaid the young woman, ſighing, "you ought to be good, I am ſure, for you will draw all out of me by ſuch kindneſs as this! the occaſion was a neglected wound, never properly healed."

"A wound? is he in the army?"

"No,---he was ſhot through the ſide in a duel."

"In a duel?" exclaimed Cecilia, "pray what is his name?"

"O that I muſt not tell you! his name is a great ſecret now, while he is in this poor place, for I know he had almoſt rather never ſee the light again than have it known."

"Surely, ſurely," cried Cecilia, with much emotion, "he cannot---I hope he cannot be Mr Belfield?"

"Ah Heaven!" cried the young woman, ſcreaming, "do you know him?"

Here, in mutual aſtoniſhment, they looked at each other.

"You are then," ſaid Cecilia, "the ſiſter of Mr Belfield? and Mr Belfield is thus ſick, his wound is not yet healed,---and he is without any help!"

"And who, madam, are *you!*" cried ſhe, "and how is it you know him?"

"My name is Beverley."

"Ah!"

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"Ah!" exclaimed she again, "I fear I have done nothing but mischief! I know very well who you are now, madam, but if my brother discovers that I have betrayed him, he will take it very unkind, and perhaps never forgive me."

"Be not alarmed," cried Cecilia; "rest assured he shall never know it. Is he not now in the country?"

"No, madam, he is now in the very next room."

"But what is become of the surgeon who used to attend him, and why does he not still visit him?"

"It is in vain, now, to hide any thing from you; my brother deceived him, and said he was going out of town merely to get rid of him."

"And what could induce him to act so strangely?"

"A reason which you, madam, I hope, will never know, Poverty!---he would not run up a bill he could not pay."

"Good Heaven!---but what can be done for him? he must not be suffered to linger thus; we must contrive some method of relieving and assisting him, whether he will consent or not."

"I fear that will not be possible. One of his friends has already found him out, and has written him the kindest letter! but he would

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would not anſwer it, and would not ſee him, and was only fretted and angry."

"Well," ſaid Cecilia, "I will not keep you longer, leſt he ſhould be alarmed by your abſence. To-morrow morning, with your leave, I will call upon you again, and then I hope you will permit me to make ſome effort to aſſiſt you."

"If it only depended upon me, madam," ſhe anſwered, "now I have the honour to know who you are, I believe I ſhould not make much ſcruple; for I was not brought up to notions ſo high as my brother. Ah! happy had it been for him, for me, for all his family, if he had not had them neither!"

Cecilia then repeated her expreſſions of comfort and kindneſs, and took her leave.

This little adventure gave her infinite concern; all the horror which the duel had originally occaſioned her, again returned; ſhe accuſed herſelf with much bitterneſs for having brought it on; and finding that Mr Belfield was ſo cruelly a ſufferer both in his health and his affairs, ſhe thought it incumbent upon her to relieve him to the utmoſt of her ability.

His ſiſter too, had extremely intereſted her; her youth, and the uncommon artleſſneſs of her converſation, added to her melancholy ſituation, and the lovelineſs of her perſon, excited in her a deſire to ſerve, and an

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an inclination to love her; and ſhe determined, if ſhe found her as deſerving as ſhe ſeemed engaging, not only to aſſiſt her at preſent, but, if her diſtreſſes continued, to receive her into her own houſe in future.

Again ſhe regretted the undue detention of her 200 *l.* What ſhe now had to ſpare was extremely inadequate to what ſhe now wiſhed to beſtow, and ſhe looked forward to the concluſion of her minority with encreaſing eagerneſs. The generous and elegant plan of life ſhe then intended to purſue, daily gained ground in her imagination, and credit in her opinion.

CHAP. IV.

A Man of Genius.

THE next morning, as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, Cecilia went in a chair to Swallow-Street; ſhe enquired for Miſs Belfield, and was told to go up ſtairs: but what was her amazement to meet, juſt coming out of the room into which ſhe was entering, young Delvile!

They both ſtarted, and Cecilia, from the ſeeming ſtrangeneſs of her ſituation, felt a con-

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confuſion with which ſhe had hitherto been unacquainted. But Delvile, preſently recovering from his ſurpriſe, ſaid to her, with an expreſſive ſmile, "How good is Miſs Beverley thus to viſit the ſick! and how much better might I have had the pleaſure of ſeeing Mr Belfield, had I but, by preſcience, known her deſign, and deferred my own enquiries till he had been revived by hers!"

And then, bowing and wiſhing her good morning, he glided paſt her.

Cecilia, notwithſtanding the openneſs and purity of her intentions, was ſo much diſconcerted by this unexpected meeting, and pointed ſpeech, that ſhe had not the preſence of mind to call him back and clear herſelf; and the various interrogatories and railleries which had already paſſed between them upon the ſubject of Mr Belfield, made her ſuppoſe that what he had formerly ſuſpected he would now think confirmed, and conclude that all her aſſertions of indifference, proceeded merely from that readineſs at hypocriſy upon particular ſubjects, of which he had openly accuſed her whole ſex.

This circumſtance and this apprehenſion took from her for a while all intereſt in the errand upon which ſhe came; but the benevolence of her heart ſoon brought it back, when, upon going into the room, ſhe ſaw her new favourite in tears.

"What is the matter?" cried ſhe, tenderly;

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derly; "no new affliction I hope has happened? Your brother is not worse?"

"No, madam, he is much the same; I was not then crying for him."

"For what then? tell me, acquaint me with your sorrows, and assure yourself you tell them to a friend."

"I was crying, madam, to find so much goodness in the world, when I thought there was so little! to find I have some chance of being again happy, when I thought I was miserable for ever! Two whole years have I spent in nothing but unhappiness, and I thought there was nothing else to be had; but yesterday, madam, brought me *you*, with every promise of nobleness and protection; and to-day, a friend of my brother's has behaved so generously, that even my brother has listened to him, and almost consented to be obliged to him!"

"And have you already known so much sorrow," said Cecilia, "that this little dawn of prosperity should wholly overpower your spirits? Gentle, amiable girl! may the future recompense you for the past, and may Mr Albany's kind wishes be fulfilled in the reciprocation of our comfort and affection!"

They then entered into a conversation which the sweetness of Cecilia, and the gratitude of Miss Belfield, soon rendered interesting, friendly and unreserved: and in a very short time, whatever was essential in the story

ſtory or ſituation of the latter was fully communicated. She gave, however, a charge the moſt earneſt, that her brother ſhould never be acquainted with the confidence ſhe had made.

Her father, who had been dead only two years, was a linen-draper in the city; he had ſix daughters, of whom herſelf was the youngeſt, and only one ſon. This ſon, Mr Belfield, was alike the darling of his father, mother, and ſiſters: he was brought up at Eaton, no expence was ſpared in his education, nothing was denied that could make him happy. With an excellent underſtanding he had uncommon quickneſs of parts, and his progreſs in his ſtudies was rapid and honourable: his father, though he always meant him for his ſucceſſor in his buſineſs, heard of his improvement with rapture, often ſaying, "My boy will be the ornament of the city, he will be the beſt ſcholar in any ſhop in London."

He was ſoon, however, taught another leſſon; when, at the age of ſixteen, he returned home, and was placed in the ſhop, inſtead of applying his talents, as his father had expected, to trade, he both deſpiſed and abhorred the name of it; when ſerious, treating it with contempt, when gay, with deriſion.

He was ſeized, alſo, with a moſt ardent deſire to finiſh his education, like thoſe of his

his ſchool-fellows who left Eaton at the ſame time, at one of the Univerſities; and, after many difficulties, this petition, at the interceſſion of his mother, was granted, old Mr Belfield telling him he hoped a little more learning would give him a little more ſenſe, and that when he became a *finiſhed ſtudent*, he would not only know the true value of buſineſs, but underſtand how to get money, and make a bargain, better than any man whatſoever within Temple-Bar.

Theſe expectations, equally ſhort-ſighted, were alſo equally fallacious with the former: the ſon again returned, and returned, as his father had hoped, a *finiſhed ſtudent*; but, far from being more tractable, or better diſpoſed for application to trade, his averſion to it now was more ſtubborn, and his oppoſition more hardy than ever. The young men of faſhion with whom he had formed friendſhips at ſchool, or at the univerſity, and with whom, from the indulgence of his father, he was always able to vie in expence, and from the indulgence of Nature to excel in capacity, earneſtly ſought the continuance of his acquaintance, and courted and coveted the pleaſure of his converſation: but though he was now totally diſqualified for any other ſociety, he loſt all delight in their favour from the fear they ſhould diſcover his abode, and aſſiduouſly endeavoured to avoid even occaſionally meeting them, leſt any of his

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his family should at the same time approach him: for of his family, though wealthy, worthy and independent, he was now so utterly ashamed, that the mortification the most cruel he could receive, was to be asked his address, or told he should be visited.

Tired, at length, of evading the enquiries made by some, and forcing faint laughs at the detection made by others, he privately took a lodging at the west end of the town, to which he thence forward directed all his friends, and where, under various pretences, he contrived to spend the greatest part of his time.

In all his expensive deceits and frolics, his mother was his never-failing confident and assistant; for when she heard that the companions of her son were men of fashion, some born to titles, others destined to high stations, she concluded he was in the certain road to honour and profit, and frequently distressed herself, without ever repining, in order to enable him to preserve upon equal terms, connections which she believed so conducive to his future grandeur.

In this wild and unsettled manner he passed some time, struggling incessantly against the authority of his father, privately abetted by his mother, and constantly aided and admired by his sisters: till, sick of so desultory a way of life, he entered himself a volunteer in the army.

How

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How ſoon he grew tired of this change has already been related *, as well as his reconciliation with his father, and his becoming a ſtudent at the Temple: for the father now grew as weary of oppoſing, as the young man of being oppoſed.

Here, for two or three years, he lived in happineſs uninterrupted: he extended his acquaintance among the great, by whom he was no ſooner known than carreſſed and admired, and he frequently viſited his family, which, though he bluſhed to own in public, he affectionately loved in private. His profeſſion, indeed, was but little in his thoughts, ſucceſſive engagements occupying almoſt all his hours. Delighted with the favour of the world, and charmed to find his preſence ſeemed the ſignal for entertainment, he ſoon forgot the uncertainty of his fortune, and the inferiority of his rank: the law grew more and more fatiguing, pleaſure became more and more alluring, and, by degrees, he had not a day unappropriated to ſome party or amuſement: voluntarily conſigning the few leiſure moments his gay circle afforded him, to the indulgence of his fancy in ſome haſty compoſitions in verſe, which were handed about in manuſcript, and which contributed to keep him in faſhion.

* See p. 16, 17. Vol. I.

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Such was his ſituation at the death of his father; a new ſcene was then opened to him, and for ſome time he heſitated what courſe to purſue.

Old Mr Belfield, though he lived in great affluence, left not behind him any conſiderable fortune, after the portions of his daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed 2000 l. had been deducted from it. But his ſtock in trade was great, and his buſineſs was proſperous and lucrative.

His ſon, however, did not merely want application and fortitude to become his ſucceſſor, but ſkill and knowledge; his deliberation, therefore, was haſty, and his reſolution improvident; he determined to continue at the Temple himſelf, while the ſhop, which he could by no means afford to relinquiſh, ſhould be kept up by another name, and the buſineſs of it be tranſacted by an agent; hoping thus to ſecure and enjoy its emoluments, without either the trouble or the humiliation of attendance.

But this ſcheme, like moſt others that have their baſis in vanity, ended in nothing but mortification and diſappointment: the ſhop which under old Mr Belfield had been flouriſhing and ſucceſsful, and enriched himſelf and all his family, could now ſcarce ſupport the expences of an individual. Without a maſter, without that diligent attention to its proſperity which the intereſt of poſſeſſion alone

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alone can give, and the authority of a principal alone can enforce, it quickly loſt its fame for the excellence of its goods, and ſoon after its cuſtomers from the report of its declenſion. The produce, therefore, diminiſhed every month; he was ſurpriſed, he was provoked; he was convinced he was cheated, and that his affairs were neglected; but though he threatened from time to time to enquire into the real ſtate of the buſineſs, and inveſtigate the cauſe of its decay, he felt himſelf indequate to the taſk; and now firſt lamented that early contempt of trade, which by preventing his acquiring ſome knowledge of it while he had youth and opportunity, made him now ignorant what redreſs to ſeek; though certain of impoſition and injury.

But yet, however diſturbed by alarming ſuggeſtions in his hours of retirement, no alteration was made in the general courſe of his life; he was ſtill the darling of his friends, and the leader in all parties, and ſtill, though his income was leſſened, his expences encreaſed.

Such were his circumſtances at the time Cecilia firſt ſaw him at the houſe of Mr Monckton: from which, two days after her arrival in town, he was himſelf ſummoned, by an information that his agent had ſuddenly left the kingdom.

The fatal conſequence of this fraudulent elopement was immediate bankruptcy.

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His ſpirits, however, did not yet fail him; as he had never been the nominal maſter of the ſhop, he eſcaped all diſhonour from its ruin, and was ſatisfied to conſign what remained to the mercy of the creditors, ſo that his own name ſhould not appear in the Gazette.

Three of his ſiſters were already extremely well married to reputable tradeſmen; the two elder of thoſe who were yet ſingle were ſettled with two of thoſe who were married, and Henrietta, the youngeſt, reſided with her mother, who had a comfortable annuity, and a ſmall houſe at Padington.

Bereft thus through vanity and imprudence of all the long labours of his father, he was now compelled to think ſeriouſly of ſome actual method of maintenance; ſince his mother, though willing to ſacrifice to him even the nouriſhment which ſuſtained her, could do for him but little, and that little he had too much juſtice to accept. The law, even to the moſt diligent and ſucceſsful, is extremely ſlow of profit, and whatever, from his connections and abilities might be hoped hereafter, at preſent required an expence which he was no longer able to ſupport.

It remained then to try his influence with his friends among the great and the powerful.

His canvaſs proved extremely honourable; every

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every one promiſed ſomething, and all ſeemed delighted to have an opportunity of ſerving him.

Pleaſed with finding the world ſo much better than report had made it, he now ſaw the concluſion of his difficulties in the proſpect of a place at court.

Belfield, with half the penetration with which he was gifted, would have ſeen in any other man the deluſive idleneſs of expectations no better founded; but though diſcernment teaches us the folly of others, experience ſingly can teach us our own! he flattered himſelf that his friends had been more wiſely ſelected than the friends of thoſe who in ſimilar circumſtances had been beguiled; and he ſuſpected not the fraud of his vanity, till he found his invitations daily ſlacken, and that his time was at his own command.

All his hopes now reſted upon one friend and patron, Mr Floyer, and uncle of Sir Robert Floyer, a man of power in the royal houſhold, with whom he had lived in great intimacy, and who at this period had the diſpoſal of a place which he ſolicited. The only obſtacle that ſeemed in his way was from Sir Robert himſelf, who warmly exerted his intereſt in favour of a friend of his own. Mr Floyer, however, aſſured Belfield of the preference, and only begged his patience till

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he could find ſome opportunity of appeaſing his nephew.

And this was the ſtate of his affairs at the time of his quarrel at the Opera-houſe. Already declared opponents of each other, Sir Robert felt double wrath that for *him* Cecilia ſhould reject his civilities; while Belfield, ſuſpecting he preſumed upon his known dependence on his uncle to affront him, felt alſo double indignation at the haughtineſs of his behaviour. And thus, ſlight as ſeemed to the world the cauſe of their conteſt, each had private motives of animoſity that ſerved to ſtimulate revenge.

The very day after this duel, Mr Floyer wrote him word that he was now obliged in common decency to take the part of his nephew, and therefore, had already given the place to the friend he had recommended.

This was the termination of his hopes, and the ſignal of his ruin! To the pain of his wound he became inſenſible, from the ſuperior pain of this unexpected miſcarriage; yet his pride ſtill enabled him to diſguiſe his diſtreſs, and to ſee all the friends whom this accident induced to ſeek him, while from the ſprightlineſs he forced in order to conceal his anguiſh, he appeared to them more lively and more entertaining than ever.

But theſe efforts, when left to himſelf and to nature, only ſunk him the deeper in ſadneſs; he found an immediate change in his way

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way of life was neceſſary, yet could not brook to make it in ſight of thoſe with whom he had ſo long lived in all the brilliancy of equality. A high principle of honour which ſtill, in the midſt of his gay career, had remained uncorrupted, had ſcrupulouſly guarded him from running in debt, and therefore, though of little poſſeſſed, that little was ſtrictly his own. He now publiſhed that he was going out of town for the benefit of purer air, diſcharged his ſurgeon, took a gay leave of his friends, and truſting no one with his ſecret but his ſervant, was privately conveyed to mean and cheap lodgings in Swallow-ſtreet.

Here, ſhut up from every human being he had formerly known, he propoſed to remain till he grew better, and then again to ſeek his fortune in the army.

His preſent ſituation, however, was little calculated to contribute to his recovery; the diſmiſſion of the ſurgeon, the precipication of his removal, the inconveniencies of his lodgings, and the unſeaſonable deprivation of long cuſtomary indulgencies, were unavoidable delays of his amendment; while the mortification of his preſent diſgrace, and the bitterneſs of his late diſappointment, preyed inceſſantly upon his mind, robbed him of reſt, heightened his fever, and reduced him by degrees to a ſtate ſo low and dangerous, that his ſervant, alarmed for his

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life, secretly acquainted his mother with his illness and retreat.

The mother, almost distracted by this intelligence, instantly, with her daughter, flew to his lodgings. She wished to have taken him immediately to her house at Padington, but he had suffered so much from his first removal, that he would not consent to another. She would then have called in a physician, but he refused even to see one; and she had too long given way to all his desires and opinions, to have now the force of mind for exerting the requisite authority of issuing her orders without consulting him.

She begged, she pleaded, indeed, and Henrietta joined in her entreaties; but sickness and vexation had not rendered him tame, though they had made him sullen: he resisted their prayers, and commonly silenced them by assurances that their opposition to the plan he had determined to pursue, only inflamed his fever, and retarded his recovery.

The motive of an obduracy so cruel to his friends was the fear of a detection which he thought not merely prejudicial to his affairs, but dishonourable to his character: for, without betraying any symptom of his distress, he had taken a general leave of his acquaintance, upon pretence of going out of town, and he could ill endure to make a discovery which would at once proclaim his degradation and his deceit.

Mr Al-

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Mr Albany had accidentally broken in upon him, by miſtaking his room for that of another ſick perſon in the ſame houſe, to whom his viſit had been intended; but as he knew and reverenced that old gentleman, he did not much repine at his intruſion.

He was not ſo eaſy when the ſame diſcovery was made by young Delvile, who chancing to meet his ſervant in the ſtreet, enquired concerning his maſter's health, and ſurpriſing from him its real ſtate, followed him home; where, ſoon certain of the change in his affairs by the change of his habitation, he wrote him a letter, in which, after apologizing for his freedom, he warmly declared that nothing could make him ſo happy as being favoured with his commands, if, either through himſelf or his friends, he could be ſo fortunate as to do him any ſervice.

Belfield deeply mortified at this detection of his ſituation, returned only a verbal anſwer of cold thanks, and deſired he would not ſpeak of his being in town, as he was not well enough to be ſeen.

This reply gave almoſt equal mortification to young Delvile, who continued, however, to call at the door with enquiries how he went on, though he made no further attempt to ſee him.

Belfield, ſoftened at length by the kindneſs of this conduct, determined to admit him; and he was juſt come from paying his

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firſt viſit, when he was met by Cecilia upon the ſtairs.

His ſtay with him had been ſhort, and he had taken no notice either of his change of abode, or his pretence of going into the country; he had talked to him only in general terms, and upon general ſubjects, till he aroſe to depart, and then he re-urged his offers of ſervice with ſo much openneſs and warmth, that Belfield, affected by his earneſtneſs, promiſed he would ſoon ſee him again, and intimated to his delighted mother and ſiſter, that he would frankly conſult with him upon his affairs.

Such was the tale which, with various minuter circumſtances, Miſs Belfield communicated to Cecilia. "My mother," ſhe added, "who never quits him, knows that you are here, madam, for ſhe heard me talking with ſomebody yeſterday, and ſhe made me tell her all that had paſſed, and that you ſaid you would come again this morning."

Cecilia returned many acknowledgements for this artleſs and unreſerved communication, but could not, when it is over, forbear enquiring by what early miſery ſhe had already, though ſo very young, ſpent *two years in nothing but unhappineſs?*

"Becauſe," ſhe anſwered, "when my poor father died all our family ſeparated, and I left every body to go and live with my mother at Padington, and I was never a favourite with

with my mother,—no more, indeed, was any body but my brother, for she thinks all the rest of the world only made for his sake. So she used to deny both herself and me almost common necessaries, in order to save up money to make him presents: though, if he had known how it was done, he would only have been angry instead of taking them. However, I should have regarded nothing that had but been for his benefit, for I loved him a great deal more than my own convenience; but sums that would distress us for months to save up, would by him be spent in a day, and then thought of no more! Nor was that all——O no! I had much greater uneasiness to suffer; for I was informed by one of my brothers-in-law how ill every thing went, and that certain ruin would come to my poor brother from the treachery of his agent; and the thought of this was always preying upon my mind, for I did not dare tell it my mother, for fear it should put her out of humour, for, sometimes, she is not very patient; and it mattered little what any of us said to my brother, for he was too gay and too confident to believe his danger."

"Well but," said Cecilia, "I hope, now, all will go better; if your brother will consent to see a physician——"

"Ah, madam! that is the thing I fear he never will do, because of being seen in these bad lodgings. I would kneel whole days to

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prevail with him, but he is unuſed to controul, and knows not how to ſubmit to it; and he has lived ſo long among the great, that he forgets he was not born as high as themſelves. Oh that he had never quitted his own family! If he had not been ſpoilt by ambition, he had the beſt heart and ſweeteſt diſpoſition in the world. But living always with his ſuperiors, taught him to diſdain his own relations and be aſhamed of us all; and yet now, in the hour of his diſtreſs—— who elſe comes to help him?"

Cecilia then enquired if ſhe wanted not aſſiſtance for herſelf and her mother, obſerving that they did not ſeem to have all the conveniences to which they were entitled.

"Why indeed, madam," ſhe replied, with an ingenuous ſmile, "when you firſt came here I was a little like my brother, for I was ſadly aſhamed to let you ſee how ill we lived! but now you know the worſt, ſo I ſhall fret about it no more."

"But this cannot be your uſual way of life; I fear the misfortunes of Mr Belfield have ſpread a ruin wider than his own."

"No indeed; he took care from the firſt not to involve us in his hazards, for he is very generous, madam, and very noble in all his notions, and could behave to us all no better about money matters than he has ever done. But from the moment we came to this diſmal place, and ſaw his diſtreſs, and that

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that *he* was ſunk ſo low who uſed always to be higher than any of us, we had a ſad ſcene indeed! My poor mother, whoſe whole delight was to think that he lived like a nobleman, and who always flattered herſelf that he would riſe to be as great as the company he kept, was ſo diſtracted with her diſappointment, that ſhe would not liſten to reaſon, but immediately diſcharged both our ſervants, ſaid ſhe and I ſhould do all the work ourſelves, hired this poor room for us to live in, and ſent to order a bill to be put upon her houſe at Padington, for ſhe ſaid ſhe would never return to it any more."

"But are you then," cried Cecilia, "without any ſervant?"

"We have my brother's man, madam, and ſo he he lights our fires, and takes away ſome of our litters; and there is not much elſe to be done, except ſweeping the rooms, for we eat nothing but cold meat from the cook ſhops."

"And how long is this to laſt?"

"Indeed I cannot tell; for the real truth is, my poor mother has almoſt loſt her ſenſes; and ever ſince our coming here, ſhe has been ſo miſerable and ſo complaining, that indeed, between her and my brother, I have almoſt loſt mine too! For when ſhe found all her hopes at an end, and that her darling ſon, inſtead of being rich and powerful, and ſurrounded by friends and admirers,

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mirers, all trying who ſhould do the moſt for him, was ſhut up by himſelf in this poor little lodging, and inſtead of gaining more, had ſpent all he was worth at firſt, with not a creature to come near him, though ill, though confined, though keeping his bed!—Oh madam, had you ſeen my poor mother when ſhe firſt caſt her eyes upon him in that condition!—indeed you could never have forgotten it!"

"I wonder not at her diſappointment," cried Cecilia, "with expectations ſo ſanguine, and a ſon of ſo much merit, it might well indeed be bitter."

"Yes, and beſides the diſappointment, ſhe is now continually reproaching herſelf for always complying with his humours, and aſſiſting him to appear better than the reſt of his family, though my father never approved her doing ſo. But ſhe thought herſelf ſo ſure of his riſing, that ſhe believed we ſhould all thank her for it in the end. And ſhe always uſed to ſay that he was born to be a gentleman, and what a grievous thing it would be to have him made a tradeſman."

"I hope, at leaſt, ſhe has not the additional miſery of ſeeing him ungrateful for her fondneſs, however injudicious it may have been?"

"O no! he does nothing but comfort and chear her! and indeed it is very good of him, for he has owned to me in private, that

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that but for her encouragement, he could not have run the course he has run, for he should have been obliged to enter into business, whether he had liked it or not. But my poor mother knows this, though he will not tell it her, and therefore she says that unless he gets well, she will punish herself all the rest of her life, and never go back to her house, and never hire another servant, and never eat any thing but bread, nor drink any thing but water!"

"Poor unhappy woman!" cried Cecilia, "how dearly does she pay for her imprudent and short-sighted indulgence! but surely you are not also to suffer in the same manner?"

"No, madam, not by her fault, for she wants me to go and live with one of my sisters: but I would not quit her for the world; I should think myself wicked indeed to leave her now. Besides, I don't at all repine at the little hardships I go through at present, because my poor brother is in so much distress, that all we save may be really turned to account; but when we lived so hardly only to procure him luxuries he had no right to, I must own I used often to think it unfair, and if I had not loved him dearly, I should not have borne it so well, perhaps, as I ought."

Cecilia now began to think it high time to release her new acquaintance by quitting her, though she felt herself so much interested in her

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her affairs, that every word she spoke gave her a desire to lengthen the conversation. She ardently wished to make her some present, but was restrained by the fear of offending, or of being again refused; she had, however, devised a private scheme for serving her more effectually than by the donation of a few guineas, and therefore, after earnestly begging to hear from her if she could possibly be of any use, she told her that she should not find her confidence misplaced, and promising again to see her soon, reluctantly departed.

CHAP. V.

An Expedient.

THE scheme now projected by Cecilia, was to acquaint the surgeon who had already attended Mr Belfield with his present situation and address, and to desire him to continue his visits, for the payment of which she would herself be accountable.

The raillery of young Delvile, however, had taught her to fear the constructions of the world, and she therefore purposed to keep both the surgeon and Mr Belfield ignorant

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norant to whom they were indebted. She was aware, indeed, that whatever might be her management, that high-spirited and unfortunate young man would be extremely hurt to find himself thus detected and pursued; but she thought his life too well worth preserving to let it be sacrificed to his pride, and her internal conviction of being herself the immediate cause of its present danger, gave to her an anxious and restless desire to be herself the means of extricating him from it.

Rupil, the name of the surgeon, she had already heard mentioned by Mr Arnott, and in getting into her chair, she ordered Ralph, her man, to enquire where he lived.

"I know already where he lives, madam," answered Ralph, "for I saw his name over a door in Cavendish-street, Oxford-road; I took particular notice of it, because it was at the house where you stood up that day on account of the mob that was waiting to see the malefactors go to Tyburn."

This answer unravelled to Cecilia a mystery which had long perplext her; for the speeches of young Delvile when he had supriſed her in that situation were now fully explained. In seeing her come out of the surgeon's house, he had naturally concluded she had only entered it to ask news of his patient, Mr Belfield; her protestations of merely standing up to avoid the crowd, he had only laughed at; and

and his hints at her reserve and dissimulation, were meant but to reproach her for refusing his offer of procuring her intelligence, at the very time when, to all appearance, she anxiously, though clandestinely, sought it for herself.

This discovery, notwithstanding it relieved her from all suspence of his meaning, gave her much vexation: to be supposed to take an interest so ardent, yet so private, in the affairs of Mr Belfield, might well authorise all suspicions of her partiality for him: and even if any doubt had yet remained, the unlucky meeting upon the stairs at his lodgings, would not fail to dispel it, and confirm the notion of her secret regard. She hoped, however, to have soon some opportunity of clearing up the mistake, and resolved in the mean time to be studiously cautious in avoiding all appearances that might strengthen it.

No caution, however, and no apprehension, could intimidate her active humanity from putting into immediate execution a plan in which she feared any delay might be fatal; and therefore the moment she got home, she wrote the following note to the surgeon.

"To —— RUPIL, Esq.

March 27, 1779.

A FRIEND of Mr Belfield begs Mr Rupil will immediately call upon that gentleman, who

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who is in lodgings about the middle of Swallow-ſtreet, and inſiſt upon viſiting him till he is perfectly recovered. Mr Rupil is entreated not to make known this requeſt, nor to receive from Mr Belfield any return for his attendance; but to attribute the diſcovery of his reſidence to accident, and to reſt aſſured he ſhall be amply recompenſed for his time and trouble by the friend who makes this application, and who is willing to give any ſecurity that Mr Rupil ſhall think proper to mention, for the performance of this engagement."

Her next difficulty was in what manner to have this note conveyed; to ſend her own ſervant was evidently betraying herſelf, to employ any other was riſking a confidence that might be ſtill more dangerous, and ſhe could not truſt to the penny-poſt, as her propoſal required an anſwer. After much deliberation, ſhe at length determined to have recourſe to Mrs Hill, to whoſe ſervices ſhe was entitled, and upon whoſe fidelity ſhe could rely.

The morning was already far advanced, but the Harrels dined late, and ſhe would not loſe a day where even an hour might be of importance. She went therefore immediately to Mrs Hill, whom ſhe found already removed into her new habitation in Fetter-lane, and equally buſy and happy in the change of ſcene and of employment.

She

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She gave to her a note, which she desired her to carry to Cavendish-street directly, and either to deliver it into Mr Rupil's own hands, or to bring it back if he was out; but upon no consideration to make known whence or from whom it came.

She then went into the back part of the shop, which by Mrs Roberts was called the parlour, and amused herself during the absence of her messenger, by playing with the children.

Mrs Hill at her return said she had found Mr Rupil at home, and as she refused to give the letter to the servant, she had been taken into a room where he was talking with a gentleman, to whom, as soon as he had read it, he said with a laugh, "Why here's another person with the same proposal as yours! however, I shall treat you both alike." And then he wrote an answer, which he sealed up, and bid her take care of. This answer was as follows:

"Mr Rupil will certainly attend Mr Belfield, whose friends may be satisfied he will do all in his power to recover him, without receiving any recompence but the pleasure of serving a gentleman who is so much beloved."

Cecilia, charmed at this unhoped for success, was making further enquiries into what had

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had paſſed, when Mrs Hill, in a low voice, ſaid, "There's the gentleman, madam, who was with Mr Rupil when I gave him the letter. I had a notion he was dodging me all the way I came, for I ſaw him juſt behind me, turn which way I would."

Cecilia then looked—and perceived young Delvile! who, after ſtopping a moment at the door, came into the ſhop, and deſired to be ſhewn ſome gloves, which, among other things, were laid in the window.

Extremely diſconcerted at the ſight of him, ſhe began now almoſt to fancy there was ſome fatality attending her acquaintance with him, ſince ſhe was always ſure of meeting, when ſhe had any reaſon to wiſh avoiding him.

As ſoon as he ſaw he was obſerved by her, he bowed with the utmoſt reſpect: ſhe coloured in returning the ſalutation, and prepared, with no little vexation, for another attack, and further raillery, ſimilar to what ſhe had already received from him: but, as ſoon as he had made his purchaſe, he bowed to her again, and, without ſpeaking, left the ſhop.

A ſilence ſo unexpected at once aſtoniſhed and diſturbed her; ſhe again deſired to hear all that had paſſed at Mr Rupil's, and from the relation gathered that Delvile had himſelf undertaken to be reſponſible for his attendance upon Mr Belfield.

A liberality

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A liberality ſo like her own failed not to impreſs her with the moſt lively eſteem: but this ſerved rather to augment than leſſen the pain with which ſhe conſidered the clandeſtine appearance ſhe thus repeatedly made to him.

She had no doubt he had immediately concluded ſhe was author of the application to the ſurgeon, and that he followed her meſſenger merely to aſcertain the fact; while his ſilence when he had made the diſcovery, ſhe could only attribute to his now believing that her regard for Mr Belfield was too ſerious for raillery.

Doubly, however, ſhe rejoiced at the generoſity of Mr Rupil, as it rendered wholly unneceſſary her further interference: for ſhe now ſaw with ſome alarm the danger to which benevolence itſelf, directed towards a youthful object, might expoſe her.

CHAP. VI.

A REMONSTRANCE.

CECILIA returned home ſo late, that ſhe was ſummoned to the dining parlour the moment ſhe entered the houſe. Her morning

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ing dreſs, and her long abſence, excited much curioſity in Mrs Harrel, which a quick ſucceſſion of queſtions evaſively anſwered ſoon made general; and Sir Robert Floyer, turning to her with a look of ſurpriſe, ſaid, "If you have ſuch freaks as theſe, Miſs Beverley, I muſt begin to enquire a little more into your proceedings."

"That, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, very coldly, "would ill repay your trouble."

"When we get her to Violet Bank," cried Mr Harrel, "we ſhall be able to keep a better watch over her."

"I hope ſo," anſwered Sir Robert; "though, faith, ſhe has been ſo demure, that I never ſuppoſed ſhe did any thing but read ſermons. However, I find there's no going upon truſt with women, any more than with money."

"Ay, Sir Robert," cried Mrs Harrel, "you know I always adviſed you not to be quite ſo eaſy, and I am ſure I really think you deſerve a little ſeverity, for not being more afraid."

"Afraid of what, madam?" cried the baronet; "of a young lady's walking out without me? Do you think I wiſh to be any reſtraint upon Miſs Beverley's time in a morning, while I have the happineſs of waiting upon her every afternoon?"

Cecilia was thunderſtruck by this ſpeech, which not only expreſſed an open avowal of his

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his pretenſions, but a confident ſecurity of his ſucceſs. She was ſhocked that a man of ſuch principles ſhould even for a moment preſume upon her favour, and irritated at the ſtubbornneſs of Mr Harrel in not acquainting him with her refuſal.

His intimation of coming to the houſe for *the happineſs of waiting upon her*, made her determine, without loſing a moment, to ſeek herſelf an explanation with him: while the diſcovery that he was included in the Eaſter party, which various other concomitant cauſes had already rendered diſagreeable to her, made her look forward to that purpoſed expedition with nothing but unwillingneſs and diſtaſte.

But though her earneſtneſs to conclude this affair made her now put herſelf voluntarily in the way of the Baronet, ſhe found her plan always counteracted by Mr Harrel, who, with an officioufneſs too obvious to paſs for chance, conſtantly ſtopt the progreſs of any diſcourſe in which he did not himſelf bear a part. A more paſſionate admirer might not have been ſo eaſily defeated; but Sir Robert, too proud for ſolicitation, and too indolent for aſſiduity, was very ſoon checked, becauſe very ſoon wearied.

The whole evening, therefore, to her infinite mortification, paſſed away without affording her any opportunity of making known to him his miſtake.

Her

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Her next effort was to remonſtrate with Mr Harrel himſelf; but this ſcheme was not more eaſy of execution than the other, ſince Mr Harrel, ſuſpecting ſhe meant again to dun him for her money, avoided all ſeparate converſation with her ſo ſkilfully, that ſhe could not find a moment to make him hear her.

She then reſolved to apply to his lady; but here her ſucceſs was not better. Mrs Harrel, dreading another lecture upon œconomy, peeviſhly anſwered to her requeſt of a conference, that ſhe was not very well, and could not talk gravely.

Cecilia, juſtly offended with them all, had now no reſource but in Mr Monckton, whoſe counſel for effectually diſmiſſing the baronet, ſhe determined to ſolicit by the firſt opportunity.

The moment, therefore, that ſhe next ſaw him, ſhe acquainted him with the ſpeeches of Sir Robert and the behaviour of Mr Harrel.

There needed no rhetoric to point out to Mr Monckton the danger of ſuffering ſuch expectations, or the impropriety of her preſent ſituation: he was ſtruck with both in a manner the moſt forcible, and ſpared not for warmth of expreſſion to alarm her delicacy, or add to her diſpleaſure. But chiefly he was exaſperated againſt Mr Harrel, aſſuring her there could be no doubt but that he had ſome particular intereſt in ſo ſtrenuouſly and

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artfully, ſupporting the pretenſions of Sir Robert. Cecilia endeavoured to refute this opinion, which ſhe regarded as proceeding rather from prejudice than juſtice; but when ſhe mentioned that the baronet was invited to ſpend the Eaſter holidays at Violet Bank, he repreſented with ſuch energy the conſequent conſtructions of the world, as well as the unavoidable encouragement ſuch intimacy would imply, that he terrified her into an earneſt entreaty to ſuggeſt to her ſome way of deliverance.

"There is only one;" anſwered he, "you muſt peremptorily refuſe to go to Violet Bank yourſelf. If, after what has paſſed, you are included in the ſame party with Sir Robert, you give a ſanction yourſelf to the reports already circulated of your engagements with him: and the effect of ſuch a ſanction will be more ſerious than you can eaſily imagine, ſince the knowledge that a connection is believed in the world, frequently, if not generally, leads by imperceptible degrees to its real ratification."

Cecilia, with the utmoſt alacrity, promiſed implicitly to follow his advice, whatever might be the oppoſition of Mr Harrel. He quitted her, therefore, with unuſual ſatisfaction, happy in his power over her mind, and anticipating with ſecret rapture the felicity he had in reſerve from viſiting her during the abſence of the family."

As

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As no private interview was neceſſary for making known her intention of giving up the Eaſter party, which was to take place in two days time, ſhe mentioned the next morning her deſign of ſpending the holidays in town, when Mr Harrel ſauntered into the breakfaſt room to give ſome commiſſion to his lady.

At firſt he only laughed at her plan, gaily rallying her upon her love of ſolitude; but when he found it was ſerious, he very warmly oppoſed it, and called upon Mrs Harrel to join in his expoſtulations. That lady complied, but in ſo faint a manner, that Cecilia ſoon ſaw ſhe did not wiſh to prevail; and with a concern that coſt her infinite pain, now finally perceived that not only all her former affection was ſubſided into indifference, but that ſince ſhe had endeavoured to abridge her amuſements, ſhe regarded her as a ſpy, and dreaded her as the cenſor of her conduct.

Mean while Mr Arnott, who was preſent, though he interfered not in the debate, waited the event with anxiety; naturally hoping her objections aroſe from her diſlike of Sir Robert, and ſecretly reſolving to be guided himſelf by her motions.

Cecilia at length, tired of the importunities of Mr Harrel, gravely ſaid, that if he deſired to hear the reaſons which obliged her to refuſe his requeſt, ſhe was ready to communicate them.

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Mr Harrel, after a little hesitation, accompanied her into another room.

She then declared her resolution not to live under the same roof with Sir Robert, and very openly expressed her vexation and displeasure that he so evidently persisted in giving that gentleman encouragement.

"My dear Miss Beverley," answered he, carelessly, "when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is necessary some friend should tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a short time ago, and so, I dare say, you will be again, when you have seen more of him."

"You amaze me, Sir!" cried Cecilia: "when was I favourable to him? Has he not always and regularly been my aversion?"

"I fancy," answered Mr Harrel, laughing, "you will not easily persuade him to think so; your behaviour at the Opera-house was ill calculated to give him that notion."

"My behaviour at the Opera-house, Sir, I have already explained to you; and if Sir Robert himself has any doubts, either from that circumstance or from any other, pardon me if I say they can only be attributed to your unwillingness to remove them. I entreat you, therefore, to trifle with him no longer, nor to subject me again to the freedom of implications extremely disagreeable to me."

"O fie,

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"O fie, fie, Miſs Beverley! after all that has paſſed, after his long expectations, and his conſtant attendance, you cannot for a moment think ſeriouſly of diſcarding him."

Cecilia, equally ſurpriſed and provoked by this ſpeech, could not for a moment tell how to anſwer it; and Mr Harrel, wilfully miſinterpreting her ſilence, took her hand, and ſaid, "Come, I am ſure you have too much honour to make a fool of ſuch a man as Sir Robert Floyer. There is not a woman in town who will not envy your choice, and I aſſure you there is not a man in England I would ſo ſoon recommend to you."

He would then have hurried her back to the next room; but, drawing away her hand with undiſguiſed reſentment, "No, Sir," ſhe cried, "this muſt not paſs! my poſitive rejection of Sir Robert the inſtant you communicated to me his propoſals, you can neither have forgotten nor miſtaken: and you muſt not wonder if I acknowledge myſelf extremely diſobliged by your unaccountable perſeverance in refuſing to receive my anſwer."

"Young ladies who have been brought up in the country," returned Mr Harrel, with his uſual negligence, "are always ſo high flown in their notions, it is difficult to deal with them; but as I am much better acquainted with the world than you can be, you muſt give me leave to tell you, that if,

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after all, you refuſe Sir Robert, it will be uſing him very ill."

"Why will you ſay ſo, Sir," cried Cecilia, "when it is utterly impoſſible you can have formed ſo prepoſterous an opinion. Pray hear me, however, finally, and pray tell Sir Robert——"

"No, no," interrupted he, with affected gaiety, "you ſhall manage it all your own way; I will have nothing to do with the quarrels of lovers."

And then, with a pretended laugh, he haſtily left her.

Cecilia was ſo much incenſed by this impracticable behaviour, that inſtead of returning to the family, ſhe went directly to her own room. It was eaſy for her to ſee that Mr Harrel was bent upon uſing every method he could deviſe, to entangle her into ſome engagement with Sir Robert, and though ſhe could not imagine the meaning of ſuch a ſcheme, the littleneſs of his behaviour excited her contempt, and the long-continued error of the Baronet gave her the utmoſt uneaſineſs. She again determined to ſeek an explanation with him herſelf, and immovably to refuſe joining the party to Violet Bank.

The following day, while the ladies and Mr Arnott were at breakfaſt, Mr Harrel came into the room to enquire if they ſhould all be ready to ſet off for his villa by ten o'clock the next day. Mrs Harrel and her brother

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brother anſwered in the affirmative; but Cecilia was ſilent, and he turned to her and repeated his queſtion.

"Do you think me ſo capricious, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "that after telling you but yeſterday I could not be of your party, I ſhall tell you to-day that I can?"

"Why you do not really mean to remain in town by yourſelf?" replied he, "you cannot ſuppoſe that will be an eligible plan for a young lady. On the contrary, it will be ſo very improper, that I think myſelf, as your Guardian, obliged to oppoſe it."

Amazed at this authoritative ſpeech, Cecilia looked at him with a mixture of mortification and anger; but knowing it would be vain to reſiſt his power if he was reſolute to exert it, ſhe made not any anſwer.

"Beſides," he continued, "I have a plan for ſome alterations in the houſe during my abſence; and I think your room, in particular, will be much improved by them: but it will be impoſſible to employ any workmen, if we do not all quit the premiſſes."

This determined perſecution now ſeriouſly alarmed her; ſhe ſaw that Mr Harrel would omit no expedient or ſtratagem to encourage the addreſſes of Sir Robert, and force her into his preſence; and ſhe began next to apprehend that her connivance in his conduct might be preſumed upon by that gentleman: ſhe reſolved, therefore, as the laſt and only

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effort in her power for avoiding him, to endeavour to find an accommodation at the houſe of Mrs Delvile, during the excurſion to Violet Bank: and if, when ſhe returned to Portman Square, the Baronet ſtill perſevered in his attendance, to intreat her friend Mr Monckton would take upon himſelf the charge of undeceiving him.

CHAP. VII.

A VICTORY.

AS not a moment was now to be loſt, Cecilia had no ſooner ſuggeſted this ſcheme than ſhe haſtened to St James's Square, to try its practicability.

She found Mrs Delvile alone, and ſtill at breakfaſt.

After the firſt compliments were over, while ſhe was conſidering in what manner to introduce her propoſal, Mrs Delvile herſelf led to the ſubject, by ſaying, "I am very ſorry to hear we are ſo ſoon to loſe you; but I hope Mr Harrel does not intend to make any long ſtay at his villa; for if he does, I ſhall

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ſhall be half tempted to come and run away with you from him."

"And that," ſaid Cecilia, delighted with this opening, "would be an honour I am *more* than half tempted to deſire."

"Why indeed your leaving London at this time," continued Mrs Delvile, "is, for me, particularly unfortunate, as, if I could now be favoured with your viſits, I ſhould doubly value them; for Mr Delvile is gone to ſpend the holidays at the Duke of Derwent's, whither I was not well enough to accompany him; my ſon has his own engagements, and there are ſo few people I can bear to ſee, that I ſhall live almoſt entirely alone."

"If I," cried Cecilia, "in ſuch a ſituation might hope to be admitted, how gladly for that happineſs would I exchange my expedition to Violet Bank!"

"You are very good, and very amiable," ſaid Mrs Delvile, "and your ſociety would, indeed, give me infinite ſatisfaction. Yet I am no enemy to ſolitude; on the contrary, company is commonly burthenſome to me; I find few who have any power to give me entertainment, and even of thoſe few, the chief part have in their manners, ſituation, or characters, an unfortunate *ſomething*, that generally renders a near connection with them inconvenient or diſagreeable. There are, indeed, ſo many draw-backs to regard

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and intimacy, from pride, from propriety, and various other collateral cauſes, that rarely as we meet with people of brilliant parts, there is almoſt ever ſome objection to our deſire of meeting them again. Yet to live wholly alone is chearleſs and depreſſing; and with you, at leaſt," taking Cecilia's hand, "I find not one ſingle obſtacle to oppoſe to a thouſand inducements, which invite me to form a friendſhip that I can only hope may be as laſting, as I am ſure it will be pleaſant."

Cecilia expreſſed her ſenſe of this partiality in the warmeſt terms; and Mrs Delvile, ſoon diſcovering by her manner that ſhe took not any delight in her intended viſit to Violet Bank, began next to queſtion her whether it would be poſſible for her to give it up.

She inſtantly anſwered in the affirmative.

"And would you really be ſo obliging," cried Mrs Delvile, with ſome ſurpriſe, "as to beſtow upon me the time you had deſtined for this gay excurſion?"

"Moſt willingly," anſwered Cecilia, "if you are ſo good as to wiſh it."

"But can you alſo——for you muſt by no means remain alone in Portman-Square, ——manage to live entirely in my houſe till Mr Harrel's return?"

To this propoſal, which was what ſhe moſt deſired, Cecilia gave a glad aſſent; and Mrs Delvile, extremely pleaſed with her compliance,

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ance, promiſed to have an apartment prepared for her immediately.

She then haſtened home, to announce her new plan.

This ſhe took occaſion to do when the family was aſſembled at dinner. The ſurprize with which ſhe was heard was very general: Sir Robert ſeemed at a loſs what concluſion to draw from her information; Mr Arnott was half elated with pleaſure, and half depreſſed with apprehenſion; Mrs Harrel wondered, without any other ſenſation; and Mr Harrel himſelf was evidently the moſt concerned of the party.

Every effort of perſuaſion and importunity he now eſſayed to prevail upon her to give up this ſcheme, and ſtill accompany them to the villa; but ſhe coolly anſwered that her engagement with Mrs Delvile was decided, and ſhe had appointed to wait upon her the next morning.

When her reſolution was found ſo ſteady, a general ill-humour took place of ſurpriſe: Sir Robert now had the air of a man who thought himſelf affronted; Mr Arnott was wretched from a thouſand uncertainties; Mrs Harrel, indeed, was ſtill the moſt indifferent; but Mr Harrel could hardly repreſs his diſappointment and anger.

Cecilia, however, was all gaiety and pleaſure: in removing only from the houſe of one guardian to another, ſhe knew ſhe could

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not be oppoſed; and the flattering readineſs with which Mrs Delvile had anticipated her requeſt, without enquiring into her motives, had relieved her from a ſituation which now grew extremely diſtreſſing, without giving to her the pain of making complaints of Mr Harrel. The abſence of Mr Delvile contributed to her happineſs, and ſhe much rejoiced in having now the proſpect of a ſpeedy opportunity to explain to his ſon, whatever had appeared myſterious in her conduct reſpecting Mr Belfield. If ſhe had any thing to regret, it was merely the impoſſibility, at this time, of waiting for the counſel of Mr Monckton.

The next morning, while the family was in the midſt of preparation for departure, ſhe took leave of Mrs Harrel, who faintly lamented the loſs of her company, and then haſtily made her compliments to Mr Harrel and Mr Arnott, and putting herſelf into a chair, was conveyed to her new habitation.

Mrs Delville received her with the moſt diſtinguiſhed politeneſs; ſhe conducted her to the apartment which had been prepared for her, led her to the library, which ſhe deſired her to make uſe of as her own, and gave her the moſt obliging charges to remember that ſhe was in a houſe of which ſhe had the command.

Young Delvile did not make his appear-

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ance till dinner time. Cecilia, from recollecting the ſtrange ſituations in which ſhe had lately been ſeen by him, bluſhed extremely when ſhe firſt met his eyes; but finding him gay and eaſy, general in his converſation, and undeſigning in his looks, ſhe ſoon recovered from her embaraſſment, and paſſed the reſt of the day without reſtraint or uneaſineſs.

Every hour ſhe ſpent with Mrs Delvile, contributed to raiſe in her eſteem the mind and underſtanding of that lady. She found, indeed, that it was not for nothing ſhe was accuſed of pride, but ſhe found at the ſame time ſo many excellent qualities, ſo much true dignity of mind, and ſo noble a ſpirit of liberality, that however great was the reſpect ſhe ſeemed to demand, it was always inferior to what ſhe felt inclined to pay.

Nor was young Delvile leſs rapid in the progreſs he made in her favour; his character, upon every opportunity of ſhewing it, roſe in her opinion, and his diſpoſition and manners had a mingled ſweetneſs and vivacity that rendered his ſociety attractive, and his converſation ſpirited.

Here, therefore, Cecilia experienced that happineſs ſhe ſo long had coveted in vain: her life was neither public nor private, her amuſements were neither diſſipated nor retired; the company ſhe ſaw were either people of high rank or ſtrong parts, and their viſits

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visits were neither frequent nor long. The situation she quitted gave a zest to that into which she entered, for she was now no longer shocked by extravagance or levity, no longer tormented with addresses which disgusted her, nor mortified by the ingratitude of the friend she had endeavoured to serve. All was smooth and serene, yet lively and interesting.

Her plan, however, of clearing to young Delvile his mistakes concerning Belfield, she could not put in execution; for he now never led to the subject, though he was frequently alone with her, nor seemed at all desirous to renew his former raillery, or repeat his enquiries. She wondered at this change in him, but chose rather to wait the revival of his own curiosity, than to distress or perplex herself by contriving methods of explanation.

Situated thus happily, she had now one only anxiety, which was to know whether, and in what manner, Mr Belfield had received his surgeon, as well as the actual state of his own and his sister's affairs: but the fear of again encountering young Delvile in suspicious circumstances, deterred her at present from going to their house. Yet her natural benevolence, which partial convenience never lulled to sleep, impressing her with an apprehension that her services might be wanted, she was induced to write to Miss Belfield, though she forbore to visit her.

Her

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Her letter was ſhort, but kind, and to the purpoſe: ſhe apologized for her officiouſneſs, deſired to know if her brother was better, and entreated her, in terms the moſt delicate, to acquaint her if yet ſhe would accept from her any aſſiſtance.

She ſent this letter by her ſervant, who, after waiting a conſiderable time, brought her the following anſwer:

To Miſs Beverley.

Ah madam! your goodneſs quite melts me! we want nothing, however, yet, though I fear we ſhall not ſay ſo much longer. But though I hope I ſhall never forget myſelf ſo as to be proud and impertinent, I will rather ſtruggle with any hardſhip than beg, for I will not diſoblige my poor brother by any fault that I can help, eſpecially now he is fallen ſo low. But, thank heaven, his wound has at laſt been dreſſed, for the ſurgeon has found him out, and he attends him for nothing; though my brother is willing to part with every thing he is worth in the world, rather than owe that obligation to him: yet I often wonder why he hates ſo to be obliged, for when he was rich himſelf he was always doing ſomething to oblige other people. But I fear the ſurgeon thinks him very bad! for he won't ſpeak to us when we follow him down ſtairs.

I am

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I am ſadly aſhamed to ſend this bad writing, but I dare not aſk my brother for any help, becauſe he would only be angry that I wrote any thing about him at all; but indeed I have ſeen too little good come of pride to think of imitating it; and as I have not his genius, I am ſure there is no need I ſhould have his defects: ill, therefore, as I write, you, madam, who have ſo much goodneſs and gentleneſs, would forgive it, I believe, if it was worſe, almoſt. And though we are not in need of your kind offers, it is a great comfort to me to think there is a lady in the world that, if we come to be quite deſtitute, and if the proud heart of my poor unhappy brother ſhould be quite broke down, will look upon our diſtreſs with pity, and generouſly help us from quite ſinking under it. I remain,

Madam,
with the moſt humble reſpect,
your ever moſt obliged
humble ſervant,
HENRIETTA BELFIELD.

Cecilia, much moved by the ſimplicity of this letter, determined that her very firſt viſit from Portman-Square ſhould be to its fair and innocent writer. And having now an aſſurance that ſhe was in no immediate diſtreſs, and that her brother was actually under Mr Rupil's care, ſhe diſmiſſed from her

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her mind the only ſubject of uneaſineſs that at preſent had endeavoured to diſturb it, and gave herſelf wholly up to the delightful ſerenity of unallayed happineſs.

Few are the days of unmixed felicity which we aknowledge while we experience, though many are thoſe we deplore, when by ſorrow taught their value, and by misfortune, their loſs. Time with Cecilia now glided on with ſuch rapidity, that before ſhe thought the morning half over, the evening was cloſed, and ere ſhe was ſenſible the firſt week was paſt, the ſecond was departed for ever. More and more pleaſed with the inmates of her new habitation, ſhe found in the abilities of Mrs Delvile ſources inexhauſtible of entertainment, and in the diſpoſition and ſentiments of her ſon ſomething ſo concordant to her own, that almoſt every word he ſpoke ſhewed the ſympathy of their minds, and almoſt every look which caught her eyes was a reciprocation of intelligence. Her heart, deeply wounded of late by unexpected indifference, and undeſerved mortification, was now, perhaps, more than uſually ſuſceptible of thoſe penetrating and exquiſite pleaſures which friendſhip and kindneſs poſſeſs the higheſt powers of beſtowing. Eaſy, gay, and airy, ſhe only roſe to happineſs, and only retired to reſt; and not merely heightened was her preſent enjoyment by her paſt diſappointment, but, carrying her retroſpection

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tion to her earlieſt remembrance, ſhe ſtill found her actual ſituation more peculiarly adapted to her taſte and temper, than any ſhe had hitherto at any time experienced.

The very morning that the deſtined fortnight was elapſed, ſhe received a note from Mrs Harrel, with information of her arrival in town, and an entreaty that ſhe would return to Portman-Square.

Cecilia, who, thus happy, had forgot to mark the progreſs of time, was now all amazement to find the term of her abſence ſo ſoon paſt. She thought of going back with the utmoſt reluctance, and of quitting her new abode with the moſt lively regret. The repreſentations of Mr Monckton daily loſt their force, and notwithſtanding her diſlike of Mr Delvile, ſhe had no wiſh ſo earneſt as that of being ſettled in his family for the reſt of her minority.

To effect this was her next thought; yet ſhe knew not how to make the propoſal; but from the uncommon partiality of Mrs Delvile, ſhe hoped, with a very little encouragement, ſhe would lead to it herſelf.

Here, however, ſhe was diſappointed; Mrs Delvile, when ſhe heard of the ſummons from the Harrels, expreſſed her ſorrow at loſing her in terms of the moſt flattering regret, yet ſeemed to think the parting indiſpenſable, and dropt not the moſt diſtant hint of attempting to prevent it.

Cecilia,

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Cecilia, vexed and diſconcerted, then made arrangements for her departure, which ſhe fixed for the next morning.

The reſt of this day, unlike every other which for the laſt fortnight had preceded it, was paſſed with little appearance, and no reality of ſatisfaction: Mrs Delvile was evidently concerned, her ſon openly avowed his chagrin, and Cecilia felt the utmoſt mortification; yet, though every one was diſcontented, no effort was made towards obtaining any delay.

The next morning during breakfaſt, Mrs Delvile very elegantly thanked her for granting to her ſo much of her time, and earneſtly begged to ſee her in future whenever ſhe could be ſpared from her other friends; proteſting ſhe was now ſo accuſtomed to her ſociety, that ſhe ſhould require both long and frequent viſits to ſoften the ſeparation. This requeſt was very eagerly ſeconded by young Delvile, who warmly ſpoke his ſatisfaction that his mother had found ſo charming a friend, and unaffectedly joined in her entreaties that the intimacy might be ſtill more cloſely cemented.

Cecilia had no great difficulty in according her compliance to thoſe demands, of which the kindneſs and cordiality ſomewhat leſſened her diſturbance at the parting.

When Mrs Harrel's carriage arrived, Mrs

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Mrs Delvile took a moſt affectionate leave of her, and her ſon attended her to the coach.

In her way down ſtairs, he ſtopt her for a few moments, and in ſome confuſion ſaid, "I wiſh much to apologize to Miſs Beverley, before her departure, for the very groſs miſtake of which I have been guilty. I know not if it is poſſible ſhe can pardon me, and I hardly know myſelf by what perverſity and blindneſs I perſiſted ſo long in my error."

"O," cried Cecilia, much rejoiced at this voluntary explanation, "if you are but convinced you were really in an error, I have nothing more to wiſh. Appearances, indeed, were ſo ſtrangely againſt me, that I ought not, perhaps, to wonder they deceived you."

"This is being candid indeed," anſwered he, again leading her on: "and in truth, though your anxiety was obvious, its cauſe was obſcure, and where any thing is left to conjecture, opinion interferes, and the judgment is eaſily warped. My own partiality, however, for Mr Belfield, will I hope plead my excuſe, as from that, and not from any prejudice againſt the Baronet, my miſtake aroſe: on the contrary, ſo highly I reſpect your taſte and your diſcernment, that your approbation, when known, can ſcarcely fail of ſecuring mine."

Great as was the aſtoniſhment of Cecilia at the concluſion of this ſpeech; ſhe was at the coach door before ſhe could make any anſwer:

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anſwer: but Delvile, perceiving her ſurpriſe, added, while he handed her in, "Is it poſſible——but no, it is *not* poſſible I ſhould be again miſtaken. I forbore to ſpeak at all, till I had information by which I could not be miſled."

"I know not in what unaccountable obſcurity," cried Cecilia, "I, or my affairs, may be involved, but I perceive that the cloud which I had hoped was diſſipated, is thicker and more impenetrable than ever."

Delvile then bowed to her with a look that accuſed her of inſincerity, and the carriage drove away.

Teazed by theſe eternal miſtakes, and provoked to find that though the object of her ſuppoſed partiality was ſo frequently changed, the notion of her poſitive engagement with one of the duelliſts was invariable, ſhe reſolved, with all the ſpeed in her power, to commiſſion Mr Monckton to wait upon Sir Robert Floyer, and in her own name give a formal rejection to his propoſals, and deſire him thenceforward to make known, by every opportunity, their total independance of each other: for ſick of debating with Mr Harrel, and deteſting all intercourſe with Sir Robert, ſhe now dropt her deſign of ſeeking an explanation herſelf.

She was received by Mrs Harrel with the ſame coldneſs with which ſhe had parted from her. That lady appeared now to have ſome uneaſineſs

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uneaſineſs upon her mind, and Cecilia endeavoured to draw from her its cauſe; but far from ſeeking any alleviation in friendſhip, ſhe ſtudiouſly avoided her, ſeeming pained by her converſation, and reproached by her ſight. Cecilia perceived this encreaſing reſerve with much concern, but with more indignation, conſcious that her good offices had merited a better reception, and angry to find that her advice had not merely failed of ſucceſs, but even expoſed her to averſion.

Mr Harrel, on the contrary, behaved to her with unuſual civility, ſeemed eager to oblige her, and deſirous to render his houſe more agreeable to her than ever. But in this he did not proſper; for Cecilia, immediately upon her return, looking in her apartment for the projected alterations, and finding none had been made, was ſo diſguſted by ſuch a detection of duplicity, that he ſunk yet lower than before in her opinion, and ſhe repined at the neceſſity ſhe was under of any longer continuing his gueſt.

The joy of Mr Arnott at again ſeeing her, was viſible and ſincere; and not a little was it encreaſed by finding that Cecilia, who ſought not more to avoid Mr Harrel and Sir Robert, than ſhe was herſelf avoided by Mrs Harrel, talked with pleaſure to nobody elſe in the houſe, and ſcarcely attempted to conceal that he was the only one of the family who poſſeſſed any portion of her eſteem.

Even

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Even Sir Robert appeared now to have formed a deſign of paying her rather more reſpect than he had hitherto thought neceſſary; but the violence he did himſelf was ſo evident, and his imperious nature ſeemed ſo repugnant to the taſk, that his inſolence, breaking forth by ſtarts, and checked only by compulſion, was but the more conſpicuous from his inadequate efforts to diſguiſe it.

CHAP. VIII.

A COMPLAINT.

AS Cecilia now found herſelf cleared, at leaſt of all ſuſpicions of harbouring too tender a regard for Mr Belfield, her objections to viſiting his ſiſter were removed, and the morning after her return to Mr Harrel's, ſhe went in a chair to Swallow-ſtreet.

She ſent her ſervant up ſtairs to enquire if ſhe might be admitted, and was immediately taken into the room where ſhe had twice before been received.

In a few minutes Miſs Belfield, ſoftly opening and ſhutting the door of the next apartment,

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apartment, made her appearance. She looked thin and pale, but much gratified by the ſight of Cecilia. "Ah Madam!" ſhe cried, "you are good indeed not to forget us! and you can little think how it chears and conſoles me, that ſuch a lady as you can condeſcend to be kind to me. It is quite the only pleaſure that I have now in the whole world."

"I grieve that you have no greater;" cried Cecilia, "you ſeem much fatigued and harraſſed. How is your brother? I fear you neglect your own health, by too much attention to his."

"No, indeed, madam; my mother does every thing for him herſelf, and hardly ſuffers any body elſe to go near him."

"What, then, makes you ſo melancholy?" ſaid Cecilia, taking her hand; "you do not look well; your anxiety, I am ſure, is too much for your ſtrength."

"How ſhould I look well, madam," anſwered ſhe, "living as I live? however, I will not talk of myſelf, but of my brother.—O he is ſo ill! indeed I am ſadly, ſadly afraid he will never be well again!"

"What does his ſurgeon ſay? you are too tender, and too much frightened to be any judge."

"It is not that I think myſelf he will die of his wound, for Mr Rupil ſays the wound is almoſt nothing; but he is in a conſtant fever,

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fever, and ſo thin and ſo weak, that indeed it is almoſt impoſſible he ſhould recover!"

"You are too apprehenſive," ſaid Cecilia; "you know not what effect the country air may have upon him; there are many, many expedients that with ſo young a man may yet be ſucceſsful."

"O no, the country air can do nothing for him! for I will not deceive you, madam, for that would be doubly a fault when I am ſo ready in blaming other people for wearing falſe appearances: beſides you are ſo good and ſo gentle, that it quite compoſes me to talk with you. So I will honeſtly ſpeak the truth, and the whole truth at once; my poor brother is loſt—O I fear for ever loſt!—all by his own unhappy pride! he forgets his father was a tradeſman, he is aſhamed of all his family, and his whole deſire is to live among the grandeſt people, as if he belonged to no other. And now that he can no longer do that, he takes the diſappointment ſo to heart that he cannot get the better of it; and he told me this morning that he wiſhed he was dead, for he did not know why he ſhould live only to ſee his own ruin! But when he ſaw how I cried at his ſaying ſo, he was very ſorry indeed, for he has always been the kindeſt brother in the world, when he has been away from the great folks who have ſpoilt him: but why, ſaid he, Henrietta, why would you have me live, when inſtead

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of raiſing you and my poor mother into an higher ſtation, I am ſunk ſo low, that I only help to conſume your own poor pittances to ſupport me in my diſgrace!"

"I am ſorry indeed," ſaid Cecilia, "to find he has ſo deep a ſenſe of the failure of his expectations: but how happens it that *you* are ſo much wiſer? Young and inexperienced as you are, and early as you muſt have been accuſtomed, from your mother as well as from Mr Belfield, to far other doctrine, the clearneſs of your judgment, and the juſtneſs of your remarks, aſtoniſh as much as they charm me."

"Ah madam! brought up as I have been brought up, there is little wonder I ſhould ſee the danger of an high education, let me be ever ſo ignorant of every thing elſe; for I, and all my ſiſters, have been the ſufferers the whole time: and while we were kept backward that he might be brought forward, while we were denied comforts, that he might have luxuries, how could we help ſeeing the evil of ſo much vanity, and wiſhing we had all been brought up according to our proper ſtation? inſtead of living in continual inconvenience, and having one part of a family ſtruggling with diſtreſs, only to let another part of it appear in a way he had no right to!"

"How rationally," ſaid Cecilia, "have you conſidered this ſubject! and how much do

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do I honour you for the affection you retain for your brother, notwithstanding the wrongs you have suffered to promote his elevation!"

"Indeed he deserves it; take but from him that one fault, pride, and I believe he has not another: an humoured and darling child as from his infancy he has always been, who at that can wonder, or be angry?"

"And has he still no plan, no scheme for his future destination?"

"No, madam, none at all; and that it is makes him so miserable, and being so miserable makes him so ill, for Mr Rupil says that with such uneasiness upon his mind, he can never, in his present low state, get well. O it is melancholy to see how he is altered! and how he has lost all his fine spirits! he that used to be the life of us all!—And now he hardly ever speaks a word, or if he does, he says something so sorrowful that it cuts us to the soul! But yesterday, when my mother and I thought he was asleep, he lifted up his head, and looked at us both with the tears in his eyes, which almost broke our hearts to see, and then, in a low voice, he said, "what a lingering illness is this! Ah, my dear mother, you and poor Henrietta ought to wish it quicker over! for should I recover, my life, hereafter, will but linger like this illness." And afterwards he called out, "what on earth is to become of me? I shall never have health for the army, nor interest, nor

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means; what am I to do? ſubſiſt in the very prime of my life upon the bounty of a widowed mother! or, with ſuch an education, ſuch connections as mine, enter at laſt into ſome mean and ſordid buſineſs?"

"It ſeems then," ſaid Cecilia, "he now leſs wants a phyſician than a friend."

"He has a friend, madam, a noble friend, would he but accept his ſervices; but he never ſees him without ſuffering freſh vexation, and his fever encreaſes after every viſit he pays him."

"Well," cried Cecilia, riſing, "I find we ſhall not have an eaſy taſk to manage him; but keep up your ſpirits, and aſſure yourſelf he ſhall not be loſt, if it be poſſible to ſave him."

She then, though with much fearfulneſs of offending, once more made an offer of her purſe. Miſs Belfield no longer ſtarted at the propoſal; yet gratefully thanking her, ſaid ſhe was not in any immediate diſtreſs, and did not dare riſk the diſpleaſure of her brother, unleſs driven to it by ſevere neceſſity. Cecilia, however, drew from her a promiſe that ſhe would apply to her in any ſudden difficulty, and charged her never to think herſelf without a banker while her direction was known to her.

She then bid her adieu, and returned home; meditating the whole way upon ſome plan of employment and advantage for Mr Belfield, which

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which by clearing his prospects, might revive his spirits, and facilitate his recovery: for since his mind was so evidently the seat of his disease, she saw that unless she could do more for him, she had yet done nothing.

Her meditation, however, turned to no account; she could suggest nothing, for she was ignorant what was eligible to suggest. The stations and employments of men she only knew by occasionally hearing that such were their professions, and such their situations in life; but with the means and gradations by which they arose to them she was wholly unacquainted.

Mr Monckton, her constant resource in all cases of difficulty, immediately occurred to her as her most able counsellor, and she determined by the first opportunity to consult with him upon the subject, certain of advice the most judicious from his experience and knowledge of the world.

But though she rested upon him her serious expectations of assistance, another idea entered her mind not less pleasant, though less promising of utility: this was to mention her views to young Delvile. He was already, she knew, well informed of the distress of Mr. Belfield, and she hoped, by openly asking his opinion, to confirm to him her freedom from any engagement with that gentleman, and convince him, at the same time, by her application to himself, that she was equally clear of any tie with the Baronet.

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CHAP. IX.

A Sympathy.

THE next day Cecilia had appointed to ſpend in St James's-Square; and ſhe knew by experience that in its courſe, ſhe ſhould in all probability find ſome opportunity of ſpeaking with Delvile alone.

This accordingly happened; for in the evening Mrs Delvile quitted the room for a few moments to anſwer a letter. Cecilia, then, left with her ſon, ſaid, after a little heſitation, "Will you not think me very ſtrange if I ſhould take the liberty to conſult you upon ſome buſineſs?"

"I already think you very ſtrange," anſwered he; "ſo ſtrange that I know not any one who at all reſembles you. But what is this conſultation in which you will permit me to have a voice?"

"You are acquainted, I believe, with the diſtreſs of Mr Belfield?"

"I am; and I think his ſituation the moſt melancholy that can be imagined. I pity him with my whole ſoul, and nothing would give me greater joy than an opportunity of ſerving him."

"He

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"He is, indeed, much to be compaſſionated," returned Cecilia, "and if ſomething is not ſpeedily done for him, I fear he will be utterly loſt. The agitation of his mind baffles all the power of medicine, and till that is relieved, his health can never be reſtored. His ſpirit, probably always too high for his rank in life, now ſtruggles againſt every attack of ſickneſs and of poverty, in preference to yielding to his fate, and applying to his friends for their intereſt and aſſiſtance. I mean not to vindicate his obduracy, yet I wiſh it were poſſible it could be ſurmounted. Indeed I dread to think what may become of him! feeling at preſent nothing but wretchedneſs and pain, looking forward in future to nothing but ruin and deſpair!"

"There is no man," cried young Delvile, with emotion, "who might not rather envy than pity ſufferings which give riſe to ſuch compaſſion!"

"Pecuniary aſſiſtance he will not accept," ſhe continued, "and, indeed, his mind is ſuperior to receiving conſolation from ſuch temporary relief; I wiſh him, therefore, to be put into ſome way of life by which his own talents, which have long enough amuſed the world, may at length become ſerviceable to himſelf. Do you think, Sir, this is poſſible?"

"How do I rejoice," cried Delvile, colouring with pleaſure while he ſpoke, "in

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this flattering concurrence of our opinions! See, madam," taking from his pocket a letter, "how I have been this very morning occupied, in endeavouring to procure for Mr Belfield ſome employment by which his education might be rendered uſeful, and his parts redound to his own credit and advantage."

He then broke the ſeal, and put into her hand a letter to a nobleman, whoſe ſon was ſoon going abroad, ſtrongly recommending Belfield to him in capacity of a tutor.

A ſympathy of ſentiment ſo ſtriking, impreſſed them at the ſame moment with ſurpriſe and eſteem; Delvile earneſtly regarded her with eyes of ſpeaking admiration, while the occaſion of his notice rendered it too pleaſant to diſtreſs her, and filled her with an inward ſatisfaction which brightened her whole countenance.

She had only time, in a manner that ſtrongly marked her approbation, to return the letter, before Mrs Delvile again made her appearance.

During the reſt of the evening but little was ſaid; Cecilia was not talkative, and young Delvile was ſo abſent, that three times his mother reminded him of an engagement to meet his father, who that night was expected at the Duke of Derwent's houſe in town, before he heard that ſhe ſpoke to him,

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and three times more before, when he had heard, he obeyed.

Cecilia, when she came back to Mr Harrel's, found the house full of company. She went into the drawing-room, but did not remain there long; she was grave and thoughtful, she wished to be alone, and by the earliest opportunity, stole away to her own apartment.

Her mind was now occupied by new ideas, and her fancy was busied in the delineation of new prospects. She had been struck from her first meeting young Delvile with an involuntary admiration of his manners and conversation; she had found upon every succeeding interview something further to approve, and felt for him a rising partiality which made her always see him with pleasure, and never part from him without a wish to see him again. Yet, as she was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her passions were under the controul of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles, she started at her danger the moment she perceived it, and instantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepossession which neither time nor intimacy had justified. She denied herself the deluding satisfaction of dwelling upon the supposition of his worth, was unusually assiduous to occupy all her time, that her heart might have

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leſs leiſure for imagination; and had ſhe found that his character degenerated from the promiſe of his appearance, the well regulated purity of her mind would ſoon have enabled her to have driven him wholly from her thoughts.

Such was her ſituation when the circumſtances of her affairs occaſioned her becoming an intimate of his houſe; and here ſhe grew leſs guarded, becauſe leſs clear-ſighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their converſation allowed her little time to conſider their effects. If at firſt ſhe had been pleaſed with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy ſhe was charmed with his diſpoſition and his behaviour; ſhe found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and ſpirited in his actions.

Qualities ſuch as theſe, when recommended by high birth, a ſtriking figure, and poliſhed manners, formed but a dangerous companion for a young woman, who, without the guard of any former prepoſſeſſion, was ſo fervent an admirer of excellence as Cecilia. Her heart made no reſiſtance, for the attack was too gentle and too gradual to alarm her vigilance, and therefore, though always ſenſible of the pleaſure ſhe received from his ſociety, it was not till ſhe returned to Portman Square, after having lived under the

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the ſame roof with him for a fortnight, that ſhe was conſcious her happineſs was no longer in her own power.

Mr Harrel's houſe, which had never pleaſed her, now became utterly diſguſtful; ſhe was wearied and uncomfortable; yet, willing to attribute her uneaſineſs to any other than the true cauſe, ſhe fancied the houſe itſelf was changed, and that all its inhabitants and viſitors were more than uſually diſagreeable: but this idle error was of ſhort duration, the moment of ſelf-conviction was at hand, and when Delvile preſented her the letter he had written for Mr Belfield, it flaſhed in her eyes!

This detection of the altered ſtate of her mind, opened to her views and her hopes a ſcene entirely new, for neither the exertion of the moſt active benevolence, nor the ſteady courſe of the moſt virtuous conduct, ſufficed any longer to wholly engage her thoughts, or conſtitute her felicity; ſhe had purpoſes that came nearer home, and cares that threatened to abſorb in themſelves that heart and thoſe faculties which hitherto had only ſeemed animated for the ſervice of others.

Yet this loſs of mental freedom gave her not much uneaſineſs, ſince the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's ſituation in life was juſt what ſhe wiſhed, more elevated than her

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own, yet not so exalted as to humble her with a sense of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the first of women, his character and disposition seemed formed to make her happy, and her own fortune was so large, that to the state of his she was indifferent.

Delighted with so flattering a union of inclination with propriety, she now began to cherish the partiality she at first had repressed, and thinking the future destination of her life already settled, looked forward with grateful joy to the prospect of ending her days with the man she thought most worthy to be entrusted with the disposal of her fortune.

She had not, indeed, any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal, but she had every reason to believe he greatly admired her, and to suspect that his mistaken notion of her prior engagement, first with Mr Belfield, and afterwards with Sir Robert Floyer, made him at present check those sentiments in her favour which, when that error was removed, she hoped to see encouraged.

Her purpose, therefore, was quietly to wait an explanation, which she rather wished retarded than forwarded, that her leisure and opportunity might be more for investigating his character, and saving herself from repentance.

CHAP.

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CHAP. X.

A Conflict.

THE day following this happy intellectual arrangement, Cecilia was visited by Mr Monckton. That gentleman, who had enquired for her immediately after the Harrels went to their villa, and who had flattered himself with reaping much advantage from their absence, by frequent meetings and confidential discourses, suffered the severest mortification when he found that her stay in town rendered her not the less inaccessible to him, since he had no personal acquaintance with the Delviles, and could not venture to present himself at their house.

He was now received by her with more than usual pleasure; the time had seemed long to her since she had conversed with him, and she was eager to ask his counsel and assistance in her affairs. She related to him the motives which had induced her to go to St James's Square, and the incorrigible obstinacy with which Mr Harrel still continued to encourage the addresses of Sir Robert Floyer; she earnestly entreated him to become her agent in a business to which she

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ſhe was unequal, by expoſtulating in her cauſe with Mr Harrel, and by calling upon Sir Robert himſelf to inſiſt upon his foregoing his unauthoriſed pretenſions.

Mr Monckton liſtened eagerly to her account and requeſt, and when ſhe had finiſhed, aſſured her he would deliberate upon each circumſtance of the affair, and then maturely weigh every method he could deviſe, to extricate her from an embarraſſment which now grew far too ſerious to be ſafely neglected.

"I will not, however," continued he, "either act or give my opinion without further enquiry, as I am confident there is a myſtery in this buſineſs which lies deeper than we can at preſent fathom. Mr Harrel has doubtleſs purpoſes of his own to anſwer by this pretended zeal for Sir Robert; nor is it difficult to conjecture what they may be. Friendſhip, in a man of his light caſt, is a mere cover, a mere name, to conceal a connection which has its baſis ſolely in the licentious convenience of borrowing money, going to the ſame gaming houſe, and mutually communicating and boaſting their mutual vices and intrigues, while, all the time, their regard for each other is equally hollow with their regard for truth and integrity."

He then cautioned her to be extremely careful with reſpect to any money tranſactions with Mr Harrel, whoſe ſplendid extravagance

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travagance he assured her was universally known to exceed his fortune.

The countenance of Cecilia, during this exhortation, was testimony sufficient to the penetrating eyes of Mr Monckton that his advice came not too soon: a suspicion of the real state of the case speedily occurred to him, and he questioned her minutely upon the subject. She endeavoured to avoid making him any answer, but his discernment was too keen for her artificial evasion, and he very soon gathered all the particulars of her transactions with Mr Harrel.

He was less alarmed at the sum she had lent him, which was rather within his expectations, than at the method she had been induced to take to procure it. He represented to her in the strongest manner the danger of imposition, nay of ruin, from the extortions and the craft of money-lenders; and he charged her upon no consideration to be tempted or persuaded again to have recourse to such perilous expedients.

She promised the most attentive observance of his advice; and then told him the acquaintance she had made with Miss Belfield, and her sorrow for the situation of her brother; though, satisfied for the present with the plan of young Delvile, she now gave up her design of soliciting his counsel.

In the midst of this conversation, a note was delivered to her from Mr Delvile senior,

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acquainting her with his return to town, and begging the favour of her to call in St James's Square the next morning, as he wiſhed to ſpeak to her upon ſome buſineſs of importance.

The eager manner in which Cecilia accepted this invitation, and her repeated and earneſt exclamation of wonder at what Mr Delvile could have to ſay, paſt not unnoticed by Mr Monckton; he inſtantly turned the diſcourſe from the Belfields, the Harrels, and the Baronet, to enquire how ſhe had ſpent her time during her viſit in St James's Square, and what was her opinion of the family after her late opportunities of intimacy?

Cecilia anſwered that ſhe had yet ſeen nothing more of Mr Delvile, who had been abſent the whole time, but with equal readineſs and pleaſure ſhe replied to all his queſtions concerning his lady, expatiating with warmth and fervour upon her many rare and eſtimable qualities.

But when the ſame interrogatories were transferred to the ſon, ſhe ſpoke no longer with the ſame eaſe, nor with her uſual promptitude of ſincerity; ſhe was embarraſſed, her anſwers were ſhort, and ſhe endeavoured to haſten from the ſubject.

Mr Monckton remarked this change with the moſt apprehenſive quickneſs, but forcing a ſmile, "Have you yet," he ſaid, "obſerved the

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the family compact in which those people are bound to beſiege you, and draw you into their ſnares?"

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia, much hurt by the queſtion, "I am ſure no ſuch compact has been formed; and I am ſure, too, that if you knew them better, you would yourſelf be the firſt to admire and do them juſtice."

"My dear Miſs Beverley," cried he, "I know them already; I do not, indeed, viſit them, but I am perfectly acquainted with their characters, which have been drawn to me by thoſe who are moſt cloſely connected with them, and who have had opportunities of inſpection which I hope will never fall to your ſhare, ſince I am ſatisfied the trial would pain, though the proof would convince you."

"What then have you heard of them?" cried Cecilia, with much earneſtneſs: "it is, at leaſt, not poſſible any ill can be ſaid of Mrs Delvile."

"I beg your pardon," returned he, "Mrs Delvile is not nearer perfection than the reſt of her family, ſhe has only more art in diſguiſing her foibles; becauſe, tho' ſhe is the daughter of pride, ſhe is the ſlave of intereſt."

"I ſee you have been greatly miſinformed," ſaid Cecilia warmly; "Mrs Delvile is the nobleſt of women! ſhe may, indeed,

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deed, from her very exaltation, have enemies, but they are the enemies of envy, not of reſentment, enemies raiſed by ſuperior merit, not excited by injury or provocation!"

"You will know her better hereafter;" ſaid Mr Monckton calmly, "I only hope your knowledge will not be purchaſed by the ſacrifice of your happineſs."

"And what knowledge of her, Sir," cried Cecilia, ſtarting, "can have power to put my happineſs in any danger?"

"I will tell you," anſwered he, "with all the openneſs you have a claim to from my regard, and then leave to time to ſhew if I am miſtaken. The Delvile family, notwithſtanding its oſtentatious magnificence, I can ſolemnly aſſure you, is poor in every branch, alike lineal and collateral."

"But is it therefore the leſs eſtimable?"

"Yes, becauſe the more rapacious. And while they count on each ſide Dukes, Earls, and Barons in their genealogy, the very wealth with which, through your means, they project the ſupport of their inſolence, and which they will graſp with all the greedineſs of avarice, they will think honoured by being employed in their ſervice, while the inſtrument, all amiable as ſhe is, by which they attain it, will be conſtantly held down as the diſgrace of their alliance."

Cecilia, ſtung to the ſoul by this ſpeech, roſe

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roſe from her chair, unwilling to anſwer it, yet unable to conceal how much it ſhocked her. Mr Monckton, perceiving her emotion, followed her, and taking her hand, ſaid, "I would not give this warning to one I thought too weak to profit from it; but as I am well informed of the uſe that is meant to be made of your fortune, and the abuſe that will follow of yourſelf, I think it right to prepare you for their artifices, which merely to point out may render abortive."

Cecilia, too much diſturbed to thank him, drew back her hand, and continued ſilent. Mr Monckton, reading through her diſpleaſure the ſtate of her affections, ſaw with terror the greatneſs of the danger which threatened him. He found, however, that the preſent was no time for enforcing objections, and perceiving he had already gone too far, though he was by no means diſpoſed to recant, he thought it moſt prudent to retreat, and let her meditate upon his exhortation while its impreſſion was yet ſtrong in her mind.

He would now, therefore, have taken leave; but Cecilia, endeavouring to recollect herſelf, and fully perſuaded that however he had ſhocked her, he had only her intereſt in view, ſtopt him, ſaying "You think me, perhaps, ungrateful, but believe me I am not; I muſt, however, acknowledge that your cenſure of Mrs Delvile hurts me

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me extremely. Indeed I cannot doubt her worthineſs; I muſt ſtill, therefore, plead for her, and I hope the time will come when you will allow I have not pleaded unjuſtly."

"Juſtly, or unjuſtly," anſwered Mr Monckton, "I am at leaſt ſure you can never plead vainly. I give up, therefore, to your opinion, my attack of Mrs Delvile, and am willing from your commendations to ſuppoſe her the beſt of the race. Nay, I will even own that perhaps Mr Delvile himſelf, as well as his lady, might paſs through life and give but little offence, had they only themſelves to think of, and no ſon to ſtimulate their arrogance."

"Is the ſon, then," ſaid Cecilia faintly, "ſo much the moſt culpable?"

"The ſon, I believe," anſwered he, "is at leaſt the chief incentive to inſolence and oſtentation in the parents, ſince it is for his ſake they covet with ſuch avidity honours and riches, ſince they plume themſelves upon regarding him as the ſupport of their name and family, and ſince their pride in him even ſurpaſſes their pride in their lineage and themſelves."

"Ah! thought Cecilia, and of ſuch a ſon who could help being proud!"

"Their purpoſe, therefore," he continued, "is to ſecure through his means your fortune, which they will no ſooner obtain, than, to my certain knowledge, they mean inſtantly, and

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and moſt unmercifully, to employ it in repairing all their dilapidated eſtates."

And then he quitted the ſubject; and, with that guarded warmth which accompanied all his expreſſions, told her he would carefully watch for her honour and welfare, and, repeating his promiſe of endeavouring to diſcover the tie by which Mr Harrel ſeemed bound to the Baronet, he left her—a prey himſelf to an anxiety yet more ſevere than that with which he had filled her! He now ſaw all his long-cheriſhed hopes in danger of final deſtruction, and ſuddenly caſt upon the brink of a precipice; where, while he ſtruggled to protect them from falling, his eyes were dazzled by beholding them totter.

Mean while Cecilia, diſturbed from the calm of ſoft ſerenity to which ſhe had yielded every avenue of her ſoul, now looked forward with diſtreſs and uneaſineſs, even to the completion of the views which but a few minutes before had compriſed all her notions of felicity. The alliance which ſo lately had ſeemed wholly unexceptionable, now appeared teeming with objections, and threatening with difficulties. The repreſentations of Mr Monckton had cruelly mortified her; well acquainted with his knowledge of the world, and wholly unſuſpicious of his ſelfiſh motives, ſhe gave to his aſſertions involuntary credit, and even while ſhe attempted to combat

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bat them, they made upon her mind an impreſſion ſcarce ever to be eraſed.

Full, therefore, of doubt and inquietude, ſhe paſſed the night in diſcomfort and irreſolution, now determining to give way to her feelings, and now to be wholly governed by the counſel of Mr Monckton.

CHAP. XI.

An Expectation.

IN this diſpoſition of mind Cecilia the next morning obeyed the ſummons of Mr Delvile, and for the firſt time went to St James's Square in a humour to look for evil inſtead of good, and meanneſs inſtead of nobleneſs.

She was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr Delvile alone, and was received by him, as uſual, with the moſt ſtately ſolemnity.

When ſhe was ſeated, "I have given you, Miſs Beverley," ſaid he, "the trouble of calling, in order to diſcuſs with you the internal ſtate of your affairs; a duty which, at this juncture, I hold to be incumbent upon my character. The delicacy due to your

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your ſex would certainly have induced me to wait upon you myſelf for this purpoſe, but for the reaſons I have already hinted to you, of fearing the people with whom you live might think it neceſſary to return my viſit. Perſons of low origin are commonly in thoſe matters the moſt forward. Not, however, that I would prejudice you againſt them; though, for myſelf, it is fit I remember that a general and indiſcriminate acquaintance, by levelling all ranks, does injury to the rites of ſociety."

Ah! thought Cecilia, how infallible is Mr Monckton! and how inevitably, in a family of which Mr Delvile is the head, ſhould I be cruelly *held down, as the diſgrace of their alliance!*

"I have applied," continued he, "to Mrs Delvile, to know if the communication which I had recommended to you, and to which ſhe had promiſed her attention, had yet paſſed; but I am informed you have not ſpoken to her upon the ſubject."

"I had nothing, Sir, to communicate," anſwered Cecilia, "and I had hoped, as Mrs Delvile made no enquiries, ſhe was ſatisfied ſhe had nothing to hear."

"With reſpect to enquiries," ſaid Mr Delvile, "I fear you are not ſufficiently aware of the diſtance between a lady of Mrs Delvile's rank, both by birth and alliance, and ſuch a young woman as Mrs Harrel, whoſe

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whose ancestors, but a short time since, were mere Suffolk farmers. But I beg your pardon;——I mean not any reflection upon yours: I have always heard they were very worthy people. And a farmer is certainly a very respectable person. Your father, I think, no more than the Dean your uncle, did nothing in that way himself?"

"No, Sir," said Cecilia drily, and much provoked by this contemptuous courtesy.

"I have always been told he was a very good sort of man; I knew none of the family myself, but the Dean. His connections with the Bishop of ——, my relation, put him often in my way. Though his naming me for one of his trustees, I must own, was rather extraordinary; but I mean not to hurt you; on the contrary, I should be much concerned to give you any uneasiness."

Again Mr Monckton arose in the mind of Cecilia, and again she acknowledged the truth of his strictures; and though she much wondered in what an harangue so pompous was to end, her disgust so far conquered her curiosity, that without hearing it she wished herself away.

"To return," said he, "to my purpose. The present period of your life is such as to render advice particularly seasonable; I am sorry, therefore, as I before said, you have not disclosed your situation to Mrs Delvile. A young lady on the point of making an establishment,

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eſtabliſhment, and with many engagements in her power, is extremely liable to be miſtaken in her judgment, and therefore ſhould ſolicit inſtruction from thoſe who are able to acquaint her what connection would be moſt to her advantage. One thing, however, I am happy to commend, the young man who was wounded in the duel——I cannot recollect his name——is, I hear, totally out of the queſtion."

What next? thought Cecilia; though ſtill ſhe gave him no interruption, for the haughtineſs of his manner was repulſive to reply.

"My deſign, therefore, is to ſpeak to you of Sir Robert Floyer. When I had laſt the pleaſure of addreſſing you upon this ſubject, you may probably remember my voice was in his favour; but I then regarded him merely as the rival of an inconſiderable young man, to reſcue you from whom he appeared an eligible perſon. The affair is now altered, that young man is thought of no more, and another rival comes forward, to whom Sir Robert is as inconſiderable as the firſt rival was to Sir Robert."

Cecilia ſtarted at this information, livelier ſenſations ſtimulated her curioſity, and ſurmiſes in which ſhe was moſt deeply intereſted quickened her attention.

"This rival," proceeded he, "I ſhould imagine no young lady would a moment heſitate in electing; he is every way the ſu-

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perior of Sir Robert except in fortune, and the deficiencies of that the ſplendour of your own may amply ſupply."

The deepeſt crimſon now tinged the cheeks of Cecilia; the prophecy of Mr Monckton ſeemed immediately fulfilling, and ſhe trembled with a riſing conflict between her approbation of the offer, and her dread of its conſequences.

"I know not, indeed," continued he, "in what eſtimation you may have been accuſtomed to hold rank and connection, nor whether you are impreſſed with a proper ſenſe of their ſuperiority and value; for early prejudices are not eaſily rooted out, and thoſe who have lived chiefly with monied people, regard even birth itſelf as unimportant when compared with wealth."

The colour which firſt glowed in the cheeks of Cecilia from expectation, now roſe yet higher from reſentment: ſhe thought herſelf already inſulted by a prelude ſo oſtentatious and humiliating to the propoſals which were to follow; and ſhe angrily determined, with whatever pain to her heart, to aſſert her own dignity, by refuſing them at once, too well ſatisfied by what ſhe now ſaw of the preſent, that Mr Monckton had been juſt in his prediction of the future.

"Your rejection, therefore," continued he, "of this honourable offer, may perhaps have been merely the conſequence of the principles

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principles in which you have been educated.—"

"Rejection?" interrupted Cecilia, amazed, "what rejection, Sir?"

"Have you not refuſed the propoſals of my Lord Ernolf for his ſon?"

"Lord Ernolf? never! nor have I ever ſeen either his Lordſhip or his ſon but in public."

"That," replied Mr Delvile, "is little to the purpoſe; where the connexion is a proper one, a young lady of delicacy has only to accede to it. But though this rejection came not immediately from yourſelf, it had doubtleſs your concurrence."

"It had not, Sir, even my knowledge."

"Your alliance then with Sir Robert Floyer is probably nearer a concluſion than I had imagined, for otherwiſe Mr Harrel would not, without conſulting you, have given the Earl ſo determined an anſwer.

"No, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, impatiently, "my alliance with him was never more diſtant, nor do I mean it ſhould ever approach more near."

She was now little diſpoſed for further converſation. Her heroic deſign of refuſing young Delvile by no means reconciled her to the diſcovery ſhe now made that he had not meant to addreſs her; and though ſhe was provoked and fretted at this new proof that Mr Harrel ſcrupled neither aſſertions

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nor actions to make her engagement with Sir Robert credited, her disappointment in finding that Mr Delvile, instead of pleading the cause of his son, was exerting his interest for another person, affected her so much more nearly, that notwithstanding he still continued his parading harangue, she scarcely knew even the subject of his discourse, and seized the first opportunity of a cessation to rise and take her leave.

He asked her if she would not call upon Mrs Delvile: but desirous to be alone, she declined the invitation: he then charged her to proceed no further with Sir Robert till he had made some enquiries concerning Lord Ernolf and graciously promising his protection and counsel, suffered her to depart.

Cecilia now perceived she might plan her rejections, or study her dignity at her leisure, for neither Mr Delvile nor his son seemed in any haste to put her fortitude to the proof. With regard, therefore, to their plots and intentions, Mr Monckton she found was wrong, but with respect to their conduct and sentiments, she had every reason to believe him right: and though her heart refused to rejoice in escaping a trial of its strength, her judgment was so well convinced that his painting was from the life, that she determined to conquer her partiality for young Delvile, since she looked forward to nothing but mortification in a connexion with his mily.

BOOK

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BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

An Agitation.

WITH this intention, and every faculty of her mind abſorbed in reflecting upon the reaſons which gave riſe to it, ſhe returned to Portman-ſquare.

As her chair was carried into the hall, ſhe obſerved, with ſome alarm, a look of conſternation among the ſervants, and an appearance of confuſion in the whole houſe. She was proceeding to her own room, intending to enquire of her maid if any evil had happened, when ſhe was croſſed upon the ſtairs by Mr Harrel, who paſſed her with an air ſo wild and perturbed, that he hardly ſeemed to know her.

Frightened and amazed, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, irreſolute which way to go; but, haſtily returning, he beckoned her to follow him.

She obeyed, and he led her to the library. He then ſhut the door, and abruptly ſeizing her hand, called out, "Miſs Beverley, I am ruined!—I am undone!—I am blaſted for ever!"

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"I hope not, Sir!" said Cecilia, extremely terrified, "I hope not! Where is Mrs Harrel?"

"O I know not! I know not!" cried he, in a frantic manner, "but I have not seen her—I cannot see her,—I hope I shall never see her more!—

"O fie! fie!" said Cecilia, "let me call her, I beg; you should consult with her in this distress, and seek comfort from her affection."

"From her affection?" repeated he, fiercely, "from her hatred you mean! do you not know that she, too, is ruined? Oh past redemption ruined!—and yet that I should hesitate, that I should a moment hesitate to conclude the whole business at once!"

"How dreadful!" cried Cecilia, "what horrible thing has happened?"

"I have undone Priscilla!" cried he, "I have blasted my credit! I have destroyed—no, not yet quite destroyed myself!"

"O yet nor ever!" cried Cecilia, whose agitation now almost equalled his own, "be not so desperate, I conjure you! speak to me more intelligibly,—what does all this mean? How has it come to pass?"

"My debts!—my creditors!—one way only," striking his hand upon his forehead, "is left for me!"

"Do not say so, Sir!" said Cecilia, "you shall

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ſhall find many ways; pray have courage! pray ſpeak calmly; and if you will but be more prudent, will but, in future, better regulate your affairs, I will myſelf undertake——"

She ſtopt; checked in the full career of her overflowing compaſſion, by a ſenſe of the worthleſſneſs of its object; and by the remembrance of the injunctions of Mr Monckton.

"What will you undertake?" cried he, eagerly, "I know you are an angel!—tell me, what will you undertake?"

"I will,—" ſaid Cecilia, heſitating, "I will ſpeak to Mr Monckton,—I will conſult——"

"You may as well conſult with every curſed creditor in the houſe!" interrupted he; "but do ſo, if you pleaſe; my diſgrace muſt perforce reach him ſoon, and a ſhort anticipation is not worth begging off."

"Are your creditors then actually in the houſe?"

"O yes, yes! and therefore it is high time I ſhould be out of it!—Did you not ſee them?—Do they not line the hall?—They threaten me with three executions before night!—three executions unleſs I ſatisfy their immediate demands!—"

"And to what do their demands amount?"

"I know not!—I dare not aſk!—to ſome

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thouſand pounds, perhaps,—and I have not, at this minute, forty guineas in the houſe!"

"Nay, then," cried Cecilia, retreating, "I can indeed do nothing! if their demands are ſo high, I *ought* to do nothing."

She would then have quitted him, not more ſhocked at his ſituation, than indignant at the wilful extravagance which had occaſioned it.

"Stay," cried he "and hear me!" then lowering his voice, "ſeek out," he continued, "your unfortunate friend,—go to the poor ruined Priſcilla,—prepare her for tidings of horror! and do not, though you renounce Me, do not abandon Her!"

Then, fiercely paſſing her, he was himſelf leaving the room; but Cecilia, alarmed by the fury of his manner, called out, "What is it you mean? what tidings of horror? whither are you going?"

"To hell!" cried he, and ruſhed out of the apartment.

Cecilia ſcreamed aloud, and conjuring him to hear her, ran after him; he paid her no regard, but, flying faſter than ſhe had power to purſue, reached his own dreſſing-room, ſhut himſelf into it with violence, and juſt as ſhe arrived at the door, turned the key, and bolted it.

Her terror was now inexpreſſible; ſhe believed him in the very act of ſuicide, and her refuſal of aſſiſtance ſeemed the ſignal for the deed:

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deed: her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueleſs and unimportant to her, compared with the preſervation of a fellow-creature: ſhe called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door, and eagerly promiſed by all that was ſacred to do every thing in her power to ſave him.

At theſe words he opened it; his face was totally without colour, and he graſped a razor in his hand.

"You have ſtopt me," ſaid he, in a voice ſcarce audible, "at the very moment I had gathered courage for the blow: but if indeed you will aſſiſt me, I will ſhut this up,—if not, I will ſteep it in my blood!"

"I will! I will!" cried Cecilia, "I will do every thing you deſire!"

"And quickly?"

"Immediately."

"Before my diſgrace is known? and while all may yet be huſhed up?"

"Yes, yes! all—any—every thing you wiſh!"

"Swear, then!"

Here Cecilia drew back; her recollection returned as her terror abated, and her repugnance to entering into an engagement for ſhe knew not what, with a man whoſe actions ſhe condemned, and whoſe principles ſhe abhorred, made all her fright now give way to indignation, and, after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe

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angrily answered, "No, Sir, I will not swear!—but yet, all that is reasonable, all that is friendly——"

"Hear *me* swear, then!" interrupted he, furiously, "which at this moment I do, by every thing eternal, and by every thing infernal, that I will not outlive the seizure of my property, and that the moment I am informed there is an execution in my house, shall be the last of my existence!"

"What cruelty! what compulsion! what impiety!" cried Cecilia: "give me, however, that horrible instrument, and prescribe to me what conditions you please."

A noise was now heard below stairs, at which Cecilia, who had not dared call for help lest she should quicken his desperation, was secretly beginning to rejoice, when, starting at the sound, he exclaimed, "I believe you are too late!—the ruffians have already seized my house!" then, endeavouring to force her out of the room, "Go," he cried, "to my wife;—I want to be alone!"

"Oh give me first," cried she, "that weapon, and I will take what oath you please!"

"No, no!—go,—leave me,—" cried he, almost breathless with emotion, "I must not now be trifled with."

"I do not trifle! indeed I do not!" cried Cecilia holding by his arm: "try, put me to the proof!"

"Swear,

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"Swear, ſolemnly ſwear, to empty my houſe of theſe creditors this moment!"

"I *do* ſwear," cried ſhe, with energy, "and Heaven proſper me as I am ſincere!"

"I ſee, I ſee you are an angel!" cried he, rapturouſly, "and as ſuch I worſhip and adore you! O you have reſtored me to life, and reſcued me from perdition!"

"Give me, then, that fatal inſtrument!"

"That inſtrument" returned he, "is nothing, ſince ſo many others are in my power; but you have now taken from me all deſire of uſing them. Go, then, and ſtop thoſe wretches from coming to me—ſend immediately for the Jew!—he will advance what money you pleaſe,—my man knows where to find him;—conſult with Mr Arnott,—ſpeak a word of comfort to Priſcilla,—but do nothing, nothing at all, till you have cleared my houſe of thoſe curſed ſcoundrels!"

Cecilia, whoſe heart ſunk within her at the ſolemn promiſe ſhe had given, the mention of the Jew, and the arduous taſk ſhe had undertaken, quitted him without reply, and was going to her own room, to compoſe her hurried ſpirits, and conſider what ſteps ſhe had to take, when hearing the noiſe in the hall grow louder, ſhe ſtopt to liſten, and catching ſome words that greatly alarmed her, went half way down ſtairs, when ſhe was met by Daviſon, Mr Harrel's man, of

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whom she enquired into the occasion of the disturbance.

He answered that he must go immediately to his master, for the bailiffs were coming into the house.

"Let him not know it if you value his life?" cried she, with new terror. "Where is Mr Arnott? call him to me—beg him to come this moment;—I will wait for him here."

The man flew to obey her: and Cecilia, finding she had time neither for deliberation nor regret, and dreading lest Mr Harrel, by hearing of the arrival of the bailiffs, should relapse into despair, determined to call to her aid all the courage, prudence, and judgment she possessed, and since to act she was compelled, endeavour with her best ability, to save his credit, and retrieve his affairs."

The moment Mr Arnott came, she ordered Davison to hasten to his master, and watch his motions.

Then, addressing Mr Arnott, "Will you, Sir," she said, "go and tell those people that if they will instantly quit the house, every thing shall be settled, and Mr Harrel will satisfy their demands?"

"Ah madam!" cried Mr Arnott, mournfully, "and how? he has no means to pay them, and I have none—without ruin to myself,—to help him!"

"Send them but away," said Cecilia, "and

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"and I will myself be your security that your promise shall not be disgraced."

"Alas, madam," cried he, "what are you doing? well as I wish to Mr Harrel, miserable as I am for my unfortunate sister, I yet cannot bear that such goodness, such beneficence should be injured!"

Cecilia, however, persisted, and with evident reluctance he obeyed her.

While she waited his return, Davison came from Mr Harrel, who had ordered him to run instantly for the Jew.

Good Heaven, thought Cecilia, that a man so wretchedly selfish and worldly, should dare, with all his guilt upon his head,

To rush unlicenced on eternity! *

Mr Arnott was more than half an hour with the people; and when, at last, he returned, his countenance immediately proclaimed the ill success of his errand. The creditors, he said, declared they had so frequently been deceived, that they would not dismiss the bailiffs, or retire themselves, without actual payment.

"Tell them, then, Sir," said Cecilia, "to send me their accounts, and, if it be possible, I will discharge them directly."

Mr Arnott's eyes were filled with tears at this declaration, and he protested, be the consequence

* Mason's Elfrida.

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conſequence to himſelf what it might, he would pay away every ſhilling he was worth, rather than witneſs ſuch injuſtice.

"No," cried Cecilia, exerting more ſpirit, that ſhe might ſhock him leſs, "I did not ſave Mr Harrel, to deſtroy ſo much better a man! you have ſuffered but too much oppreſſion already; the preſent evil is mine; and from me, at leaſt, none I hope will ever ſpread to Mr Arnott."

Mr Arnott could not bear this; he was ſtruck with grief, with admiration, and with gratitude, and finding his tears now refuſed to be reſtrained, he went to execute her commiſſion in ſilent dejection.

The dejection, however, was encreaſed, though his tears were diſperſed, when he returned; "Oh madam!" he cried, "all your efforts, generous as they are, will be of no avail! the bills even now in the houſe amount to more than 7000 *l.*!"

Cecilia, amazed and confounded, ſtarted and claſped her hands, calling out, "What muſt I do! to what have I bound myſelf! and how can I anſwer to my conſcience,—to my ſucceſſors, ſuch a diſpoſal, ſuch an abuſe of ſo large a part of my fortune!"

Mr Arnott could make no anſwer; and they ſtood looking at each other in ſilent irreſolution, till Daviſon brought intelligence that the Jew was already come, and waited to ſpeak with her.

"And

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"And what can I ſay to him?" cried ſhe, more and more agitated; "I underſtand nothing of uſury; how am I to deal with him?"

Mr Arnott then confeſſed that he ſhould himſelf have inſtantly been bail for his brother, but that his fortune, originally not large, was now ſo much impaired by the many debts which from time to time he had paid for him, that as he hoped ſome day to have a family of his own, he dared not run a riſk by which he might be utterly ruined, and the leſs, as his ſiſter had at Violet Bank been prevailed upon to give up her ſettlement.

This account, which explained the late uneaſineſs of Mrs Harrel, ſtill encreaſed the diſtreſs of Cecilia; and every moment ſhe obtained for reflection, augmented her reluctance to parting with ſo large a ſum of money for ſo worthleſs an object, and added ſtrength to her reſentment for the unjuſtifiable menaces which had extorted from her ſuch a promiſe. Yet not an inſtant would ſhe liſten to Mr Arnott's offer of fulfilling her engagement, and charged him, as ſhe conſidered her own ſelf-eſteem worth her keeping, not to urge to her a propoſal ſo ungenerous and ſelfiſh.

Daviſon now came again to haſten her, and ſaid that the Jew was with his maſter, and they both impatiently expected her.

Cecilia, half diſtracted with her uncertainty

tainty how to act, changed colour at this meſſage, and exclaimed, "Oh Mr Arnott, run I beſeech you for Mr Monckton! bring him hither directly,—if any body can ſave me it is him; but if I go back to Mr Harrel, I know it will be all over!"

"Certainly," ſaid Mr Arnott, "I will run to him this moment."

"Yet no!—ſtop!—" cried the trembling Cecilia, "he can now do me no good,—his counſel will arrive too late to ſerve me,—it cannot call back the oath I have given! it cannot, compulſatory as it was, make me break it, and not be miſerable for ever!"

This idea ſufficed to determine her; and the apprehenſion of ſelf-reproach, ſhould the threat of Mr Harrel be put in execution, was more inſupportable to her blameleſs and upright mind, than any loſs or diminution which her fortune could ſuſtain.

Slowly however, with tardy and unwilling ſteps, her judgment repugnant, and her ſpirit repining, ſhe obeyed the ſummons of Mr Harrel, who, impatient of her delay, came forward to meet her.

"Miſs Beverley," he cried, "there is not a moment to be loſt; this good man will bring you any ſum of money, upon a proper conſideration, that you will command; but if he is not immediately commiſſioned, and theſe curſed fellows are not got out of my houſe,

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houſe, the affair will be blown——and what will follow," added he, lowering his voice, "I will not again frighten you by repeating, though I ſhall never recant."

Cecilia turned from him in horror; and, with a faltering voice and heavy heart, entreated Mr Arnott to ſettle for her with the Jew.

Large as was the ſum, ſhe was ſo near being of age, and her ſecurity was ſo good, that the tranſaction was ſoon finiſhed: 7500 *l.* was received of the Jew, Mr Harrel gave Cecilia his bond for the payment, the creditors were ſatisfied, the bailiffs were diſmiſſed, and the houſe was ſoon reſtored to its cuſtomary appearance of ſplendid gaiety.

Mrs Harrel, who during this ſcene had ſhut herſelf up in her own room to weep and lament, now flew to Cecilia, and in a tranſport of joy and gratitude, thanked her upon her knees for thus preſerving her from utter ruin: the gentle Mr Arnott ſeemed uncertain whether moſt to grieve or rejoice; and Mr Harrel repeatedly proteſted ſhe ſhould have the ſole guidance of his future conduct.

This promiſe, the hope of his amendment, and the joy ſhe had expanded, ſomewhat revived the ſpirits of Cecilia; who, however, deeply affected by what had paſſed, haſtened from them all to her own room.

She had now parted with 8050 *l.* to Mr Harrel, without any ſecurity when or how it was

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was to be paid; and that ardour of benevolence which taught her to value her riches merely as they enabled her to do good and generous actions, was here of no avail to console or reward her, for her gift was compelled, and its receiver was all but detested. "How much better," cried she, "would this have been bestowed upon the amiable Miss Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-spirited brother! and how much less a sum would have made the virtuous and industrious Hills easy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made responsible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in opposition to my principles, and lavish in defiance of my judgment!—Oh that my much-deceived uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! and that my weak and unhappy friend had met with a worthier protector of her virtue and safety!"

As soon, however, as she recovered from the first shock of her reflections, she turned her thoughts from herself to the formation of some plan that might, at least, render her donation of serious and lasting use. The signal service she had just done them gave her at present an ascendancy over the Harrels, which she hoped, if immediately exerted, might prevent the return of so calamitous a scene, by engaging them both to an

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an immediate change of conduct. But unequal herſelf to contriving expedients for this purpoſe that might not eaſily be controverted, ſhe determined to ſend the next morning a petition to Mr Monckton to call upon her, reveal to him the whole tranſaction, and entreat him to ſuggeſt to her what, with moſt probability of ſucceſs, ſhe might offer to their conſideration.

While this was paſſing in her mind, on the evening of the day in which ſhe had ſo dearly purchaſed the right of giving counſel, ſhe was ſummoned to tea.

She found Mr Harrel and his lady engaged in earneſt diſcourſe: as ſoon as ſhe appeared, the former ſaid, "My dear Miſs Beverley, after the extraordinary kindneſs you have ſhewn me this morning, you will not, I am ſure, deny me one trifling favour which I mean to aſk this evening."

"No" ſaid Mrs Harrel, "that I am ſure ſhe will not, when ſhe knows that our future appearance in the world depends upon her granting it."

"I hope then," ſaid Cecilia, "I ſhall not wiſh to refuſe it."

"It is nothing in the world," ſaid Mr Harrel, "but to go with us to-night to the Pantheon."

Cecilia was ſtruck with the utmoſt indignation at this propoſal; that the man who in the morning had an execution in his houſe,

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houſe, ſhould languiſh in the evening for the amuſement of a public place,—that he who but a few hours before was plunging uncalled into eternity, ſhould, while the intended inſtrument of death was yet ſcarce cold from the graſp of his hand, deliberately court a return of his diſtreſs, by inſtantly recurring to the methods which had involved him in it, irritated and ſhocked her beyond even a wiſh of diſguiſing her diſpleaſure, and therefore, after an expreſſive ſilence, ſhe gave a cold, but abſolute denial.

"I ſee," ſaid Mr Harrel, ſomewhat confuſed, "you do not underſtand the motives of our requeſt. The unfortunate affair of this morning is very likely to ſpread preſently all over the town; the only refutation that can be given to it, is by our all appearing in public before any body knows whether to believe it or not."

"Do, my deareſt friend," cried his lady, "oblige me by your compliance; indeed our whole reputation depends upon it. I made an engagement yeſterday to go with Mrs Mears, and if I diſappoint her, every body will be gueſſing the reaſon."

"At leaſt," anſwered Cecilia "*my* going can anſwer no purpoſe to you: pray, therefore do not aſk me; I am ill diſpoſed for ſuch ſort of amuſement, and have by no means your opinion of its neceſſity."

"But if we do not *all* go," ſaid Mr Harrel,

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rel, "we do almoſt nothing; you are known to live with us, and your appearance at this critical time is important to our credit. If this misfortune gets wind, the conſequence is, that every dirty tradeſman in town to whom I owe a ſhilling, will be forming the ſame curſed combination thoſe ſcoundrels formed this morning, of coming in a body, and waiting for their money, or elſe bringing an execution into my houſe. The only way to ſilence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and ſhewing ourſelves to the world as if nothing had happened. Favour us, therefore, to-night with your company, which is really important to us, or ten to one, but in another fortnight, I ſhall be juſt in the ſame ſcrape."

Cecilia, however incenſed at this intelligence that his debts were ſtill ſo numerous, felt now as much alarmed at the mention of an execution, as if ſhe was in actual danger of ruin herſelf. Terrified, therefore, tho' not convinced, ſhe yielded to their perſuaſions, and conſented to accompany them.

They ſoon afterſeparated, to makeſome alteration in their dreſs, and then, calling in their way for Mrs Mears, they proceeded to the Pantheon.

CHAP.

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CHAP. II.

A MAN OF THE TON.

AT the door of the Pantheon they were joined by Mr Arnott and Sir Robert Floyer, whom Cecilia now saw with added aversion: they entered the great room during the second act of the concert, to which as no one of the party but herself had any desire to listen, no sort of attention was paid; the ladies entertaining themselves as if no Orchestra was in the room, and the gentlemen, with an equal disregard to it, struggling for a place by the fire, about which they continued hovering till the music was over.

Soon after they were seated, Mr Meadows, sauntering towards them, whispered something to Mrs Mears, who, immediately rising, introduced him to Cecilia: after which, the place next to her being vacant, he cast himself upon it, and lolling as much at his ease as his situation would permit, began something like a conversation with her.

"Have you been long in town, ma'am?"

"No, Sir."

"This is not your first winter?"

"Of being in town it is."

"Then you have something new to see:

O charm-

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O charming! how I envy you!—Are you pleaſed with the Pantheon?"

"Very much; I have ſeen no building at all equal to it."

"You have not been abroad. Travelling is the ruin of all happineſs! There's no looking at a building here after ſeeing Italy."

"Does all happineſs, then, depend upon the ſight of buildings?" ſaid Cecilia, when, turning towards her companion, ſhe perceived him yawning, with ſuch evident inattention to her anſwer, that not chuſing to interrupt his reverie, ſhe turned her head another way.

For ſome minutes he took no notice of this; and then, as if ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, he called out haſtily, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, you were ſaying ſomething?"

"No, Sir, nothing worth repeating."

"O pray don't puniſh me ſo ſeverely as not to let me hear it!"

Cecilia, though merely not to ſeem offended at his negligence, was then again beginning an anſwer, when looking at him as ſhe ſpoke, ſhe perceived that he was biting his nails with ſo abſent an air, that he appeared not to know he had aſked any queſtion. She therefore broke off, and left him to his cogitation.

Some time after he addreſſed her again, ſaying, "Don't you find this place extremely tireſome, ma'am?"

"Yes,"

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"Yes, Sir," ſaid ſhe, half laughing, "it is, indeed, not very entertaining!"

"Nothing is entertaining," anſwered he, "for two minutes together. Things are ſo little different one from another, that there is no making pleaſure out of any thing. We go the ſame dull round for ever; nothing new, no variety! all the ſame thing over again! Are you fond of public places, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, *ſoberly*, as Lady Grace ſays."

"Then I envy you extremely, for you have ſome amuſement always in your own power. How deſirable that is!"

"And have not you the ſame reſources?"

"O no! I am tired to death! tired of every thing! I would give the univerſe for a diſpoſition leſs difficult to pleaſe. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleaſure? When one has ſeen one thing, one has ſeen every thing. O, 'tis heavy work! Don't you find it ſo, ma'am?"

This ſpeech was ended with ſo violent a fit of yawning, that Cecilia would not trouble herſelf to anſwer it: but her ſilence, as before, paſſed wholly unnoticed, exciting neither queſtion nor comment.

A long pauſe now ſucceeded, which he broke at laſt, by ſaying, as he writhed himſelf about upon his ſeat, "Theſe forms would be much more agreeable if there were backs to them. 'Tis intolerable to be forced to ſit like

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like a school-boy. The first study of life is ease. There is, indeed, no other study that pays the trouble of attainment. Don't you think so, ma'am?"

"But may not even that," said Cecilia, "by so much study, become labour?"

"I am vastly happy you think so."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I thought you said——I really beg your pardon, but I was thinking of something else."

"You did very right, Sir," said Cecilia, laughing, "for what I said by no means merited any attention."

"Will you do me the favour to repeat it?" cried he, taking out his glass to examine some lady at a distance.

"O no," said Cecilia, "that would be trying your patience too severely."

"These glasses shew one nothing but defects," said he; "I am sorry they were ever invented. They are the ruin of all beauty; no complexion can stand them. I believe that solo will never be over! I hate a solo; it sinks, it depresses me intolerably."

"You will presently, Sir," said Cecilia, looking at the bill of the concert, "have a full piece; and that, I hope, will revive you."

"A full piece! oh insupportable! it stuns, it fatigues, it overpowers me beyond endurance! no taste in it, no delicacy, no room for the smallest feeling."

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"Perhaps, then, you are only fond of ſinging?"

"I ſhould be, if I could hear it; but we are now ſo miſerably off in voices, that I hardly ever attempt to liſten to a ſong, without fancying myſelf deaf from the feebleneſs of the performers. I hate every thing that requires attention. Nothing gives pleaſure that does not force its own way."

"You only, then, like loud voices, and great powers?"

"O worſe and worſe!——no, nothing is ſo diſguſting to me. All my amazement is that theſe people think it worth while to give Concerts at all; one is ſick to death of muſic."

"Nay," cried Cecilia, "if it gives no pleaſure, at leaſt it takes none away: for, far from being any impediment to converſation, I think every body talks more during the performance than between the acts. And what is there better you could ſubſtitute in its place?"

Cecilia, receiving no anſwer to this queſtion, again looked round to ſee if ſhe had been heard; when ſhe obſerved her new acquaintance, with a very thoughtful air, had turned from her to fix his eyes upon the ſtatue of Britannia.

Very ſoon after, he haſtily aroſe, and ſeeming entirely to forget that he had ſpoken to her, very abruptly walked away.

Mr

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Mr Gosport, who was advancing to Cecilia, and had watched part of this scene, stopt him as he was retreating, and said "Why Meadows, how's this? are you caught at last?"

"O worn to death! worn to a thread!" cried he, stretching himself and yawning; "I have been talking with a young lady to entertain her! O such heavy work! I would not go through it again for millions!"

"What, have you talked yourself out of breath?"

"No; but the effort! the effort!—O, it has unhinged me for a fortnight!—Entertaining a young lady!—one had better be a galley-slave at once!"

"Well but, did she not pay your toils? She is surely a sweet creature."

"Nothing can pay one for such insufferable exertion! though she's well enough, too,—better than the common run,—but shy, quite too shy; no drawing her out."

"I thought that was to your taste. You commonly hate much volubility. How have I heard you bemoan yourself when attacked by Miss Larolles!"

"Larolles? O distraction! She talks me into a fever in two minutes. But so it is for ever! nothing but extremes to be met with! common girls are too forward, this lady is too reserved——always some fault! always some drawback! nothing ever perfect!"

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"Nay, nay," cried Mr Goſport, "you do not know her; ſhe is perfect enough in all conſcience."

"Better not know her then," anſwered he, again yawning, "for ſhe cannot be pleaſing. Nothing perfect is natural;—I hate every thing out of nature."

He then ſtrolled on, and Mr Goſport approached Cecilia.

"I have been wiſhing," cried he, "to addreſs you this half hour, but as you were engaged with Mr Meadows, I did not dare advance."

"O, I ſee your malice?" cried Cecilia; "you are determined to add weight to the value of your company, by making me fully ſenſible where the balance would preponderate."

"Nay, if you do not admire Mr Meadows," cried he, "you muſt not even whiſper it to the winds."

"Is he then ſo very admirable?"

"O, he is now in the very height of faſhionable favour: his dreſs is a model, his manners are imitated, his attention is courted, and his notice is envied."

"Are you not laughing?"

"No indeed; his privileges are much more extenſive than I have mentioned: his deciſion fixes the exact limits between what is vulgar and what is elegant, his praiſe gives

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gives reputation, and a word from him in public confers faſhion!"

"And by what wonderful powers has he acquired ſuch influence?"

"By nothing but a happy art in catching the reigning foibles of the times, and carrying them to an extreme yet more abſurd than any one had done before him. Ceremony, he found, was already exploded for eaſe, he therefore, exploded eaſe for indolence; devotion to the fair ſex, had given way to a more equal and rational intercourſe, which, to puſh ſtill farther, he preſently exchanged for rudeneſs; joviality, too, was already baniſhed for philoſophical indifference, and that, therefore, he diſcarded, for wearineſs and diſguſt."

"And is it poſſible that qualities ſuch as theſe ſhould recommend him to favour and admiration?"

"Very poſſible, for qualities ſuch as theſe conſtitute the preſent ſtate of the times. A man of the *Ton*, who would now be conſpicuous in the gay world, muſt invariably be inſipid, neghgent, and ſelfiſh."

"Admirable requiſites!" cried Cecilia; "and Mr Meadows, I acknowledge, ſeems to have attained them all."

"He muſt never," continued Mr Goſport, "confeſs the leaſt pleaſure from any thing, a total apathy being the chief ingredient of his character: he muſt, upon no

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account, ſuſtain a converſation with any ſpirit, leſt he ſhould appear, to his utter diſgrace, intereſted in what is ſaid: and when he is quite tired of his exiſtence, from a total vacuity of ideas, he muſt affect a look of abſence, and pretend, on the ſudden, to be wholly loſt in thought."

"I would not wiſh," ſaid Cecilia, laughing, "a more amiable companion!"

"If he is aſked his opinion of any lady," he continued, "he muſt commonly anſwer by a grimace; and if he is ſeated next to one, he muſt take the utmoſt pains to ſhew by his liſtleſſneſs, yawning and inattention, that he is ſick of his ſituation; for what he holds of all things to be moſt gothic, is gallantry to the women. To avoid this is, indeed, the principal ſolicitude of his life. If he ſees a lady in diſtreſs for her carriage, he is to enquire of her what is the matter, and then, with a ſhrug, wiſh her well through her fatigues, wink at ſome by-ſtander, and walk away. If he is in a room where there is a crowd of company, and a ſcarcity of ſeats, he muſt early enſure one of the beſt in the place, be blind to all looks of fatigue, and deaf to all hints of aſſiſtance, and ſeeming totally to forget himſelf, lounge at his eaſe, and appear an unconſcious ſpectator of what is going forward. If he is at a ball where there are more women than men, he muſt decline dancing at all, though it ſhould happen

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happen to be his favourite amuſement, and ſmiling as he paſſes the diſengaged young ladies, wonder to ſee them ſit ſtill, and perhaps aſk them the reaſon."

"A moſt allurring character indeed!" cried Cecilia; "and pray how long have theſe been the accompliſhments of a fine gentleman?"

"I am but an indifferent chronologer of the modes," he anſwered; "but I know it has been long enough to raiſe juſt expectations that ſome new folly will be ſtarted ſoon, by which the preſent race of INSENSIBLISTS may be driven out. Mr Meadows is now at the head of this ſect, as Miſs Larolles is of the VOLUBLE, and Miſs Leeſon of the SUPERCILIOUS. But this way comes another, who, though in a different manner, labours with the ſame view, and aſpires at the ſame reward, which ſtimulate the ambition of this happy *Triplet* that of exciting wonder by peculiarity, and envy by wonder."

This deſcription announced Capt. Areſby; who, advancing from the fire-place told Cecilia how much he rejoiced in ſeeing her, ſaid he had been *reduced to deſpair* by ſo long miſſing that honour, and that he had feared ſhe *made it a principle* to avoid coming in public, having ſought her in vain *partout*.

He then ſmiled, and ſtrolled on to another party.

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"And pray of what sect," said Cecilia, "is this gentleman?"

"Of the sect of JARGONISTS," answered Mr Gosport; "he has not an ambition beyond paying a passing compliment, nor a word to make use of that he has not picked up at public places. Yet this dearth of language, however you may despise it, is not merely owing to a narrow capacity: foppery and conceit have their share in the limitation, for though his phrases are almost always ridiculous or misapplied, they are selected with much study, and introduced with infinite pain."

"Poor man!" cried Cecilia, is it possible it can cost him any trouble to render himself so completely absurd?"

"Yes; but not more than it costs his neighbours to keep him in countenance. Miss Leeson, since she has presided over the sect of the SUPERCILIOUS, spends at least half her life in wishing the annihilation of the other half; for as she must only speak in her own Coterie, she is compelled to be frequently silent, and therefore, having nothing to think of, she is commonly gnawn with self-denial, and soured with want of amusement: Miss Larolles, indeed, is better off, for in talking faster than she thinks, she has but followed the natural bent of her disposition: as to this poor JARGONIST, he has, I must own, rather a hard task, from the continual restraint

reſtraint of ſpeaking only out of his own Liliputian vocabulary, and denying himſelf the relief of ever uttering one word by the call of occaſion: but what hardſhip is that, compared with what is borne by Mr Meadows? who, ſince he commenced INSENSIBLIST, has never once dared to be pleaſed, nor ventured for a moment to look in good humour?"

"Surely, then," ſaid Cecilia, "in a ſhort time, the puniſhment of this affectation will bring its cure."

"No; for the trick grows into habit, and habit is a ſecond nature. A ſecret idea of fame makes his forbearance of happineſs ſupportable to him; for he has now the ſelf-ſatisfaction of conſidering himſelf raiſed to that higheſt pinnacle of faſhionable refinement which is built upon apathy and ſcorn, and from which, proclaiming himſelf ſuperior to all poſſibility of enjoyment, he views the whole world with contempt! holding neither beauty, virtue, wealth, nor power, of importance ſufficient to kindle the ſmalleſt emotion!"

"O that they could all round liſten to you!" cried Cecilia; "they would ſoon, I think, ſicken of their folly, if they heard it thus admirably expoſed."

"No; they would but triumph that it had obtained them ſo much notice!—But pray do you ſee that gentleman, or don't you

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chuſe to know him, who has been bowing to you this half hour?"

"Where?" cried Cecilia, and, looking round, perceived Mr Morrice; who, upon her returning his ſalutation, inſtantly approached her, though he had never ventured to ſhew himſelf at Mr Harrel's, ſince his unfortunate accident on the evening of the maſquerade.

Entirely caſting aſide the eaſy familiarity at which he had latterly arrived, he enquired after her health with the moſt fearful diffidence, and then, bowing profoundly, was modeſtly retiring; when Mrs Harrel, perceiving him, ſmiled with ſo much good-humour, that he gathered courage to return and addreſs her, and found her, to his infinite delight, as obliging and civil as ever.

The Concert was now over; the ladies aroſe, and the gentlemen joined them. Morrice, at ſight of Mr Harrel, was again ſhrinking; but Mr Harrel, immediately ſhaking hands with him, enquired what had kept him ſo long from Portman-Square? Morrice, then, finding, to his great ſurpriſe, that no one had thought more of the miſchief but himſelf who had committed it, joyouſly diſcarded his timidity, and became as ſprightly as before his mortification.

A motion was now made for going to the tea-room; and as they walked on, Cecilia, in looking up to examine the building, ſaw in

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in one of the galleries young Delvile, and almoſt at the ſame time caught his eye.

Scarcely now did a moment elapſe before he joined her. The ſight of him, ſtrongly reviving in her mind the painful contrariety of opinion with which ſhe had lately thought of him, the ſentiments ſo much in his favour which but a few days before ſhe had encouraged, and which it was only that morning ſhe had endeavoured to cruſh, made her meet him with a kind of melancholy that almoſt induced her to lament he was amiable, and repine that ſhe knew none like him.

His appearance, mean time, was far different; he ſeemed enchanted at the ſight of her, he flew eagerly to meet her, and his eyes ſparkled with pleaſure as he approached her; a pleaſure neither moderate nor diſguiſed, but lively, unreſtrained, and expreſſive.

Cecilia, whoſe plans ſince ſhe had laſt ſeen him had twice varied, who firſt had looked forward to being united with him for ever, and afterwards had determined to avoid with him even a common acquaintance, could not, while theſe thoughts were all recurring to her memory, receive much delight from obſerving his gaiety, or feel at all gratified by his unembarraſſed manners. The openneſs of his attentions, and the frankneſs of his admiration, which hitherto had charmed her as marks of the ſincerity of his character, now

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ſhocked her as proofs of the indifference of his heart, which feeling for her a mere common regard, that affected neither his ſpirits nor his peace, he manifeſted without ſcruple, ſince it was not accompanied with even a wiſh beyond the preſent hour.

She now, too, recollected that ſuch had always been his conduct, one ſingle and ſingular moment excepted, when, as he gave to her his letter for Mr Belfield, he ſeemed ſtruck, as ſhe was herſelf, by the extraordinary co-incidence of their ideas and proceedings; that emotion, however, ſhe now regarded as caſual and tranſitory, and ſeeing him ſo much happier than herſelf, ſhe felt aſhamed of her deluſion, and angry at her eaſy captivation.

Reflections ſuch as theſe, though they added freſh motives to her reſolution of giving up all thoughts of his alliance, were yet ſo humiliating, that they robbed her of all power of receiving pleaſure from what was paſſing, and made her forget that the place ſhe was in was even intended for a place of entertainment.

Young Delvile, after painting in lively colours the loſs his houſe had ſuſtained by her quitting it, and dwelling with equal force upon the regret of his mother and his own, aſked in a low voice if ſhe would do him ſo much honour as to introduce him to Mr Harrel; "As the ſon," added he, "of a brother

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brother guardian, I think I have a kind of claim to his acquaintance."

Cecilia could not refuſe, though as the requeſt was likely to occaſion more frequent meetings, ſhe perſuaded herſelf ſhe was unwilling to comply. The ceremony therefore paſt, and was again repeated with Mrs Harrel, who, though ſhe had ſeveral times ſeen him, had never been formally made known to him.

The Harrels were both of them much pleaſed at this mark of civility in a young man whoſe family had prepared them rather to expect his ſcorn, and expreſſed their wiſhes that he would drink his tea in their party; he accepted their invitation with alacrity, and turning to Cecilia, ſaid "Have I not ſkilfully timed my introduction? But though you have done me this honour with Mr and Mrs Harrel, I muſt not yet, I preſume, entreat you to extend it to a certain happy gentleman of this company," glancing his eyes towards Sir Robert Floyer.

"No, Sir," anſwered ſhe, with quickneſs, "yet, nor ever!"

They were now at the door leading down ſtairs to the tea-room. Cecilia ſaw that Sir Robert, who had hitherto been engaged with ſome gentlemen, ſeemed to be ſeeking her: and the remembrance of the quarrel which had followed her refuſal of his aſſiſtance at the Opera-houſe, obliged her to determine, ſhould

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ſhould he offer it again, to accept it: but the ſame brutality which forced this intention, contributed to render it repugnant to her, and ſhe reſolved if poſſible to avoid him, by hurrying down ſtairs before he reached her. She made, therefore, a ſudden attempt to ſlip through the crowd, and as ſhe was light and active, ſhe eaſily ſucceeded; but though her haſty motion ſeparated her from the reſt of her party, Delvile, who was earneſtly looking at her, to diſcover her meaning in the diſclaiming ſpeech ſhe made about Sir Robert, ſaw into her deſign, but ſuffered her not to go alone; he contrived in a moment to follow and join her, while ſhe was ſtopping at the foot of the ſtairs for Mrs Harrel.

"Why what a little thief you are," cried he, "to run away from us thus! what do you think Sir Robert will ſay? I ſaw him looking for you at the very inſtant of your flight."

"Then you ſaw at the ſame time," ſaid Cecilia, "the reaſon of it."

"Will you give me leave," cried he, laughing, "to repeat this to my Lord Ernolf?"

"You may repeat it, Sir, if you pleaſe," ſaid Cecilia, piqued that he had not rather thought of himſelf than of Lord Ernolf, "to the whole Pantheon."

"And if I ſhould," cried he, "half of it, at leaſt, would thank me; and to obtain the applauſe

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applauſe of ſo noble an aſſembly, what would it ſignify that Sir Robert ſhould cut my throat?"

"I believe," ſaid Cecilia, deeply mortified by a raillery that ſhewed ſo little intereſt in her avowal of indifference, "you are determined to make me as ſick of that man's name, as I am of his converſation."

"And is it poſſible," exclaimed Delvile, in a tone of ſurpriſe, "that ſuch can be your opinion, and yet, ſituated as you are, the whole world at your command, and all mankind at your devotion——but I am anſwering you ſeriouſly, when you are only ſpeaking by rule."

"What rule, Sir?"

"That which young ladies, upon certain occaſions, always preſcribe themſelves."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the reſt of the company; though not before Cecilia had received ſome little conſolation for her diſpleaſure, by finding that young Delvile ſtill ſuppoſed ſhe was engaged, and flattering herſelf his language would be different were he informed of the contrary.

Morrice now undertook to procure them a table for tea, which, as the room was very full, was not eaſily done; and while they were waiting his ſucceſs, Miſs Larolles, who from the ſtairs had perceived Cecilia, came running up to her, and taking her hand, called out "Lord, my dear creature, who'd have

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have thought of seeing you here? I was never so surprised in my life! I really thought you was gone into a convent, it's so extreme long since I've seen you. But of all things in the world, why was you not at Lady Nyland's last assembly? I thought of asking Mrs Harrel fifty times why you did not come, but it always went out of my head. You've no notion how excessively I was disappointed."

"You are very obliging," said Cecilia, laughing, "but I hope, since you so often forgot it, the disappointment did not much lessen your entertainment."

"O Lord no! I was never so happy in my life. There was such a crowd, you could not move a finger. Every body in the world was there. You've no idea how delightful it was. I thought verily I should have fainted with the heat."

"That was delightful indeed! And how long did you stay?"

"Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with Cotillons, and finished with country dances. It was the most elegant thing you ever saw in your life; every thing quite in a style. I was so monstrously fatigued, I could hardly get through the last dance. I really thought I should have dropt down dead. Only conceive dancing five hours in such a monstrous crowd! I assure you when I got home my feet were all blisters. You have no idea how they smarted."

"And

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"And whence comes it," cried young Delvile, "that *you* partake so little of these delights?"

"Because I fear," answered Cecilia, "I came too late into the school of fashion to be a ductile pupil."

"Do you know," continued Miss Larolles, "Mr Meadows has not spoke one word to me all the evening! though I am sure he saw me, for I sat at the outside on purpose to speak to a person or two, that I knew would be strolling about; for if one sits on the inside, there's no speaking to a creature you know; so I never do it at the Opera, nor in the boxes at Ranelagh, nor any where. It's the shockingest thing you can conceive to be made sit in the middle of those forms; one might as well be at home, for nobody can speak to one."

"But you don't seem to have had much better success," said Cecilia, "in keeping at the outside."

"O yes I have, for I got a little chat with two or three people as they were passing, for, you know, when one sits there, they can't help saying something; though I assure you all the men are so excessively odd they don't care whether they speak to one or no. As to Mr Meadows, he's really enough to provoke one to death. I suppose he's in one of his absent fits. However, I assure you, I think it's extreme impertinent of him, and so

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ſo I ſhall tell Mr Sawyer, for I know he'll make a point of telling him of it again."

"I rather think," ſaid Cecilia, "the beſt would be to return the compliment in kind, and when he next recollects you, appear to have forgotten him."

"O Lord, that's a very good notion! ſo I will, I declare. But you can't conceive how glad I am the Concert's over; for I aſſure you, though I ſat as near the fire as poſſible, I was ſo extreme cold you've no idea, for Mr Meadows never would let me have the leaſt peep at it. I declare I believe he does it on purpoſe to plague one, for he grows worſe and worſe every day. You can't think how I hate him!"

"Not eaſily I believe indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, archly.

"O do but look!" reſumed the fair VOLUBLE, "if there is not Mrs Mears in her old red gown again! I begin to think ſhe'll never have another. I wiſh ſhe was to have an execution in her houſe, if it was only to get rid of it! I am ſo fatigued with the ſight of it you can't conceive."

Mr Morrice now brought intelligence that he had ſecured one ſide of a table which would very well accommodate the ladies; and that the other ſide was only occupied by one gentleman, who, as he was not drinking tea himſelf, would doubtleſs give up his place when the party appeared.

Miſs

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Miſs Larolles then ran back to her own ſet, and the reſt followed Mr Morrice; Mrs Harrel, Mrs Mears and Cecilia took their places. The gentleman oppoſite to them proved to be Mr Meadows: Morrice, therefore, was much deceived in his expectations, for, far from giving up his place, he had flung himſelf all along upon the form in ſuch a lounging poſture, while he reſted one arm upon the table, that, not contented with merely keeping his own ſeat, he filled up a ſpace meant for three.

Mr Harrel had already walked off to another party: Delvile ſtood aloof for ſome minutes, expecting Sir Robert Floyer would ſtation himſelf behind Cecilia; but Sir Robert, who would ſcarce have thought ſuch a condeſcenſion due to a princeſs, diſdained any appearance of aſſiduity, even while he made it his care to publiſh his pretenſions: and therefore, finding no accommodation to pleaſe him, he ſtalked towards ſome gentlemen in another part of the room. Delvile then took the poſt he had neglected, and Mr Arnott, who had not had courage to make any effort in his own favour, modeſtly ſtood near him. Cecilia contrived to make room for Mr Goſport next to herſelf, and Morrice was ſufficiently happy in being allowed to call the waiters, ſuperintend the proviſions, and ſerve the whole party.

The taſk of making tea fell upon Cecilia, who

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who being ſomewhat incommoded by the vicinity of her neighbours, Mrs Mears called out to Mr Meadows, "Do pray, Sir, be ſo good as to make room for one of us at your ſide."

Mr Meadows, who was indolently picking his teeth, and examining them with a tooth pick caſe glaſs, did not, at firſt, ſeem to hear her; and when ſhe repeated her requeſt, he only looked at her, and ſaid "umph?"

"Now really, Mr Meadows," ſaid ſhe, "when you ſee any ladies in ſuch diſtreſs, I wonder how you can forbear helping them."

"In diſtreſs, are you?" cried he, with a vacant ſmile, "pray what's the matter?"

"Don't you ſee? we are ſo crouded we can hardly ſit."

"Can't you?" cried he, "upon my honour it's very ſhameful that theſe people don't contrive ſome ſeats more convenient."

"Yes," ſaid Mrs Mears; "but if you would be ſo kind as to let ſomebody elſe ſit by you we ſhould not want any contrivance."

Here Mr Meadows was ſeized with a furious fit of yawning, which as much diverted Cecilia and Mr Goſport, as it offended Mrs Mears, who with great diſpleaſure added, "Indeed, Mr Meadows, it's very ſtrange that you never hear what's ſaid to you."

"I beg your pardon," ſaid he, "were you

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you ſpeaking to me?" and again began picking his teeth.

Morrice, eager to contraſt his civility with the inattention of Mr Meadows, now flew round to the other ſide of the table, and calling out, "let *me* help you, Miſs Beverley, I can make tea better than any body," he lent over that part of the form which Mr Meadows had occupied with one of his feet, in order to pour it out himſelf: but Mr Meadows, by an unfortunte removal of his foot, bringing him forwarder than he was prepared to go, the tea-pot and its contents were overturned immediately oppoſite to Cecilia.

Young Delvile, who ſaw the impending evil, from an impetuous impulſe to prevent her ſuffering by it, haſtily drew her back, and bending down before her, ſecured her preſervation by receiving himſelf the miſchief with which ſhe was threatened.

Mrs Mears and Mrs Harrel vacated their ſeats in a moment, and Mr Goſport and Mr Arnott aſſiſted in clearing the table, and removing Cecilia, who was very ſlightly hurt, and at once ſurpriſed, aſhamed, and pleaſed at the manner in which ſhe had been ſaved.

Young Delvile, though a ſufferer from his gallantry, the hot water having penetrated through his coat to his arm and ſhoulder, was at firſt inſenſible to his ſituation, from an apprehenſion that Cecilia had not wholly

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wholly escaped: and his enquiries were so eager and so anxious, made with a look of such solicitude, and a voice of such alarm, that, equally astonished and gratified, she secretly blest the accident which had given birth to his uneasiness, however she grieved for its consequence to himself.

But no sooner was he satisfied of her safety, than he felt himself obliged to retire; yet attributing to inconvenience what was really the effect of pain, he hurried away with an appearance of sport, saying, "There is something, I must own, rather *unknightly* in quitting the field for a wet jacket, but the company, I hope, will only give me credit for flying away to Ranelagh. So

"Like a brave general after being beat,
I'll exult and rejoice in a prudent retreat." *

He then hastened to his carriage: and poor Morrice, frightened and confounded at the disaster he had occasioned, sneaked after him with much less ceremony. While Mr Meadows wholly unconcerned by the distress and confusion around him, sat quietly picking his teeth, and looking on during the whole transaction, with an unmeaning stare, that made it doubtful whether he had even perceived it.

* Smart.

Order

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Order being now ſoon reſtored, the ladies finiſhed their tea, and went up ſtairs. Cecilia, to whom the late accident had afforded much new and intereſting matter for reflection, wiſhed immediately to have returned home, but ſhe was not the leader of the party, and therefore could not make the propoſal.

They then ſtrolled through all the apartments, and having walked about till the faſhionable time of retiring, they were joined by Sir Robert Floyer, and proceeded to the little room near the entrance to the great one, in order to wait for their carriages.

Here Cecilia again met Miſs Larolles, who came to make various remarks, and infinite ridicule, upon ſundry unfaſhionable or uncoſtly articles in the dreſſes of the ſurrounding company; as well as to complain, with no little reſentment, that Mr Meadows was again ſtanding before the fire!

Captain Areſby alſo advanced to tell her he was quite *abattu* by having ſo long loſt ſight of her, to hope ſhe *would make a renounce* of mortifying the world by diſcarding it, and to proteſt he had waited for his carriage till he was actually upon the point of being *accablé*.

In the midſt of this *jargon*, to which the fulneſs of Cecilia's mind hardly permitted her to liſten, there ſuddenly appeared at the door of the apartment, Mr Albany, who, with

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with his uſual auſterity of countenance, ſtopt to look round upon the company.

"Do you ſee," cried Mr Goſport to Cecilia, "who approaches? your poor *ſycophants* will again be taken to taſk, and I, for one, tremble at the coming ſtorm!"

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "I wiſh I was ſafe in my chair! that man always frightens me out of my ſenſes. You've no notion what diſagreeable things he ſays to one. I aſſure you I've no doubt but he's crazy: and I'm always in the ſhockingeſt fright in the world for fear he ſhould be taken with a fit while I'm near him."

"It is really a petrifying thing," ſaid the Captain, "that one can go to no *ſpectacle* without the *horreur* of being *obſedé* by that perſon! if he comes this way, I ſhall certainly make a renounce, and retire."

"Why ſo?" ſaid Sir Robert, "what the d—l do you mind him for?"

"O he is the greateſt bore in nature!" cried the Captain, "and I always do *mon poſſible* to avoid him; for he breaks out into ſuch barbarous phraſes, that I find myſelf *degouté* with him in a moment."

"O, I aſſure you," ſaid Miſs Larolles, "he attacks one ſometimes in a manner you've no idea. One time he came up to me all of a ſudden, and aſked me what good I thought I did by dreſſing ſo much? Only conceive how ſhocking!"

"O,

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"O, I have had the *horreur* of queſtions of that ſort from him *ſans fin*," ſaid the Captain. "Once he took the liberty to aſk me, what ſervice I was of to the world? and another time, he deſired me to inform him, whether I had ever made any poor perſon pray for me? And, in ſhort, he has ſo frequently inconvenienced me by his impertinencies, that he really bores me to a degree."

"That's juſt the thing that makes him hunt you down," ſaid Sir Robert; "if he were to aſk me queſtions for a month together, I ſhould never trouble myſelf to move a muſcle."

"The matter of his diſcourſe," ſaid Mr Goſport, "is not more ſingular than the manner; for without any ſeeming effort or conſciouſneſs, he runs into blank verſe perpetually. I have made much enquiry about him, but all I am able to learn, is, that he was certainly confined, at one part of his life, in a private mad-houſe: and though now, from not being miſchievous, he is ſet at liberty, his looks, language, and whole behaviour, announce the former injury of his intellects."

"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, half ſcreaming, "what ſhocking notions you put in one's head! I declare I dare ſay I ſha'n't get ſafe home for him, for I aſſure you I believe he's taken a ſpite to me! and all becauſe one day, before I knew of his odd

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ways, I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat. Do you know it put him quite in a paſſion! only conceive how ill-natured!"

"O he has diſtreſſed me," exclaimed the Captain, with a ſhrug, "*partout!* and found ſo much fault with every thing I have done, that I ſhould really be glad to have the honour to cut, for the moment he comes up to me, I know what I have to expect!"

"But I muſt tell you," cried Miſs Larolles, "how monſtrouſly he put me in a fright one evening when I was talking with Miſs Moffat. Do you know, he came up to us, and aſked what we were ſaying! and becauſe we could not think in a minute of ſomething to anſwer him, he ſaid he ſuppoſed we were only talking ſome ſcandal, and ſo we had better go home, and employ ourſelves in working for the poor! only think how horrid! and after that, he was ſo exceſſive impertinent in his remarks, there was quite no bearing him. I aſſure you he cut me up ſo you've no notion."

Here Mr Albany advanced; and every body but Sir Robert moved out of the way.

Fixing his eyes upon Cecilia, with an expreſſion *more in ſorrow than in anger*, after contemplating her ſome time in ſilence, he exclaimed, "Ah lovely, but periſhable flower! how long will that ingenuous countenance, wearing, becauſe wanting no diſ-

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guiſe, look reſponſive of the whiteneſs of the region within? How long will that air of innocence irradiate your whole appearance? unſpoilt by proſperity, unperverted by power! pure in the midſt of ſurrounding depravity! unſullied in the tainted air of infectious perdition!"

The confuſion of Cecilia at this public addreſs, which drew upon her the eyes and attention of all the company, was inexpreſſible; ſhe aroſe from her ſeat, covered with bluſhes, and ſaying, "I fancy the carriage muſt be ready," preſſed forward to quit the room, followed by Sir Robert, who anſwered, "No, no, they'll call it when it comes up. Arnott, will you go and ſee where it is?"

Cecilia ſtopt, but whiſpered Mrs Harrel to ſtand near her.

"And whither," cried Albany indignantly, "whither wouldſt thou go? Art thou already diſdainful of my precepts? and canſt thou not one ſhort moment ſpare from the tumultuous folly which encircles thee? Many and many are the hours thou may'ſt ſpend with ſuch as theſe; the world, alas! is full of them; weary not then, ſo ſoon, of an old man that would admoniſh thee,—he cannot call upon thee long, for ſoon he will be called upon himſelf."

This ſolemn exhortation extremely diſtreſſed her; and fearing to ſtill further of-

fend him by making another effort to eſcape, ſhe anſwered in a low voice, "I will not only hear, but thank you for your precepts, if you will forbear to give them before ſo many witneſſes."

"Whence," cried he ſternly, "theſe vain and ſuperficial diſtinctions? Do you not dance in public? What renders you more conſpicuous? Do you not dreſs to be admired, and walk to be obſerved? Why then this fantaſtical ſcruple, unjuſtified by reaſon, unſupported by analogy? Is folly only to be publiſhed? Is vanity alone to be exhibited? Oh ſlaves of ſenſeleſs contraction! Oh feeble followers of yet feebler prejudice! daring to be wicked, yet fearing to be wiſe; dauntleſs in levity, yet ſhrinking from the name of virtue!"

The latter part of this ſpeech, during which he turned with energy to the whole company, raiſed ſuch a general alarm, that all the ladies haſtily quitted the room, and all the gentlemen endeavoured to enter it, equally curious to ſee the man who made the oration, and the lady to whom it was addreſſed. Cecilia, therefore, found her ſituation inſupportable; "I muſt go," ſhe cried, "whether there is a carriage or not! Pray, Mrs Harrel, let us go!"

Sir Robert then offered to take her hand, which ſhe was extremely ready to give him; but while the crowd made their paſſage difficult

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cult, Albany, following and ſtopping her, ſaid, "What is it you fear? a miſerable old man, worn out by the ſorrows of that experience from which he offers you counſel? What, too, is it you truſt? a libertine wretch, coveting nothing but your wealth, for the gift of which he will repay you by the perverſion of your principles!"

"What the d—l do you mean by that?" cried the Baronet.

"To ſhew," anſwered he, auſterely, "the inconſiſtency of falſe delicacy; to ſhew how thoſe who are too timid for truth, can fearleſs meet licentiouſneſs."

"For Heaven's ſake, Sir," cried Cecilia, "ſay no more to me now! Call upon me in Portman-Square when you pleaſe,—reprove me in whatever you think me blameable, I ſhall be grateful for your inſtructions, and bettered, perhaps, by your care;—but leſſons and notice thus public can do me nothing but injury."

"How happy," cried he, "were no other injury near thee! ſpotleſs were then the hour of thy danger; bright, fair and refulgent thy paſſage to ſecurity! the Good would receive thee with praiſe, the Guilty would ſupplicate thy prayers, the Poor would follow thee with bleſſings, and children would be taught by thy example!"

He then quitted her, every body making way as he moved, and proceeded into the

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great room. Mrs Harrel's carriage being alſo announced at the ſame time, Cecilia loſt not an inſtant in haſtening away.

Sir Robert, as he conducted her, diſdainfully laughed at the adventure, which the general licence allowed to Mr Albany prevented his reſenting, and which therefore he ſcorned to appear moved at.

Mrs Harrel could talk of nothing elſe, neither was Cecilia diſpoſed to change the ſubject, for the remains of inſanity which ſeemed to hang upon him were affecting without being alarming, and her deſire to know more of him grew every inſtant ſtronger.

This deſire, however, outlived not the converſation to which it gave riſe; when ſhe returned to her own room, no veſtige of it remained upon her mind, which a nearer concern and deeper intereſt wholly occupied.

The behaviour of young Delvile had pained, pleaſed, and diſturbed her. His activity to ſave her from miſchief might proceed merely from gallantry or good nature; upon that, therefore, ſhe dwelt little: but his eagerneſs, his anxiety, his inſenſibility to himſelf, were more than good breeding could claim, and ſeemed to ſpring from a motive leſs artificial.

She now, therefore, believed that her partiality was returned; and this belief had power to ſhake all her reſolves, and enfeeble all

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all her objections. The arrogance of Mr Delvile leſſened in her reflections, the admonitions of Mr Monckton abated in their influence. With the firſt, ſhe conſidered that though connected ſhe need not live; and for the ſecond, though ſhe acknowledged the excellence of his judgment, ſhe concluded him wholly ignorant of her ſentiments of Delvile; which ſhe imagined, when once revealed, would make every obſtacle to the alliance ſeem trifling, when put in competition with mutual eſteem and affection.

CHAP. III.

A Reproof.

THE attention of Cecilia to her own affairs, did not make her forgetful of thoſe of the Harrels: and the morning after the buſy day which was laſt recorded, as ſoon as ſhe quitted the breakfaſt-room, ſhe began a note to Mr Monckton, but was interrupted with information that he was already in the houſe.

She went to him immediately, and had the ſatisfaction of finding him alone: but deſirous

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ſirous as ſhe was to relate to him the tranſactions of the preceding day, there was in his countenance a gravity ſo unuſual, that her impatience was involuntarily checked, and ſhe waited firſt to hear if he had himſelf any thing to communicate.

He kept her not long in ſuſpenſe; "Miſs Beverley," he ſaid, "I bring you intelligence which, though I know you will be very ſorry to hear, it is abſolutely neceſſary ſhould be told you immediately: you may otherwiſe, from however laudable motives, be drawn into ſome action which you may repent for life."

"What now!" cried Cecilia, much alarmed.

"All that I ſuſpected," ſaid he, "and more than I hinted to you, is true; Mr Harrel is a ruined man! he is not worth a groat, and he is in debt beyond what he ever poſſeſſed."

Cecilia made no anſwer: ſhe knew but too fatally the deſperate ſtate of his affairs, yet that *his debts were more than he had ever poſſeſſed* ſhe had not thought poſſible.

"My enquiries," continued he, "have been among principals, and ſuch as would not dare deceive me. I haſtened, therefore, to you, that this timely notice might enforce the injunctions I gave you when I had the pleaſure of ſeeing you laſt, and prevent a misjudging generoſity from leading you into any

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any injury of your own fortune, for a man who is paſt all relief from it, and who cannot be ſaved, even though you were to be deſtroyed for his ſake."

"You are very good," ſaid Cecilia, "but your counſel is now too late!" She then briefly acquainted him with what paſſed, and with how large a ſum ſhe had parted.

He heard her with rage, amazement, and horror: and after inveighing againſt Mr Harrel in the bittereſt terms, he ſaid, "But why, before you ſigned your name to ſo baſe an impoſition, could you not ſend for me?"

"I wiſhed, I meant to have done it," cried ſhe, "but I thought the time paſt when you could help me. How, indeed, could you have ſaved me? my word was given, given with an oath the moſt ſolemn, and the firſt I have ever taken in my life."

"An oath ſo forced," anſwered he, "the moſt delicate conſcience would have abſolved you from performing. You have, indeed, been groſsly impoſed upon; and pardon me if I add, unaccountably to blame. Was it not obvious that relief ſo circumſtanced muſt be temporary? If his ruin had been any thing leſs than certain, what tradeſman would have been ſo inſolent? You have therefore deprived yourſelf of the power of doing good to a worthier object, merely to grant a longer date to extravagance and villainy."

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"Yet how," cried Cecilia, deeply touched by this reproof, "how could I do otherwise? Could I see a man in the agonies of despair, hear him first darkly hint his own destruction, and afterwards behold him almost in the very act of suicide, the instrument of self-murder in his desperate hand—and yet, though he put his life in my power, though he told me I could preserve him, and told me he had no other reliance or resource, could I leave him to his dreadful despondence, refuse my assisting hand to raise him from perdition, and, to save what, after all, I am well able to spare, suffer a fellow creature, who flung himself upon my mercy, to offer up his last accounts with an action blacker than any which had preceded it?—No, I cannot repent what I have done, though I lament, indeed, that the object was not more deserving."

"Your representation, said Mr Monckton, "like every thing else that I ever heard you utter, breathes nothing but benevolence and goodness: but your pity has been abused, and your understanding imposed upon. Mr Harrel had no intention to destroy himself; the whole was an infamous trick, which, had not your generosity been too well known, would never have been played."

"I cannot think quite so ill of him," said Cecilia, "nor for the world would I have

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have riſked my own future reproaches by truſting to ſuch a ſuſpicion, which, had it proved wrong, and had Mr Harrel, upon my refuſal, committed the fatal deed, would have made his murder upon my own conſcience reſt for ever! Surely the experiment would have been too hazardous, when the conſequence had all my future peace in its power."

"It is impoſſible not to revere your ſcruples," ſaid Mr Monckton, "even while I conſider them as cauſeleſs; for cauſeleſs they undoubtedly were: the man who could act ſo attrocious a part, who could ſo ſcandalouſly pillage a young lady who was his gueſt and his ward, take advantage of her temper for the plunder of her fortune, and extort her compliance by the baſeſt and moſt diſhonourable arts, meant only to terrify her into a compliance; for he can be nothing leſs than a downright and thorough ſcoundrel, capable of every ſpecies of mean villainy."

He then proteſted he would at leaſt acquaint her other guardians with what had paſſed, whoſe buſineſs it would be to enquire if there was any chance of redreſs.

Cecilia, however, had not much trouble in combating this propoſal; for though her objections, which were merely thoſe of punctilious honour and delicacy, weighed nothing with a man who regarded them as abſurdities, yet his own apprehenſions of appearing

pearing too officious in her affairs, forced him, after a little deliberation, to give up the design.

"Besides, said Cecilia, "as I have his bond for what I have parted with, I have, at least, no right to complain, unless, after he receives his rents, he refuses to pay me."

"His bonds! his rents!" exclaimed Mr Monckton; "what is a man's bond who is not worth a guinea? and what are his rents, when all he ever owned must be sold before they are due, and when he will not himself receive a penny from the sale, as he has neither land, house, nor possession of any sort, that is not mortgaged?"

"Nay, then," said Cecilia, "if so, it is indeed all over! I am sorry! I am grieved! —but it is past, and nothing, therefore, remains, but that I try to forget I ever was richer!"

"This is very youthful philosophy," said Mr Monckton; "but it will not lessen your regret hereafter, when the value of money is better known to you."

"If I shall dearly buy my experience," said Cecilia, "let me be the more attentive to making good use of it; and, since my loss seems irremediable to myself, let me at least endeavour to secure its utility to Mr Harrel."

She then told him her wish to propose to that gentleman some scheme of reformation, while

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while yesterday's events were yet recent in his mind: but Mr Monckton, who had hardly patience to hear her, exclaimed, "He is a wretch, and deserves the full force of the disgrace he is courting. What is now most necessary is to guard you from his further machinations, for you may else be involved in ruin as deep as his own. He now knows the way to frighten you, and he will not fail to put it in practice."

"No, Sir," answered Cecilia; "he would vainly apply to me in future: I cannot repent that I ventured not yesterday to brave his menaces; but too little is the comfort I feel from what I have bestowed, to suffer any consideration to make me part with more."

"Your resolution," answered he, "will be as feeble as your generosity will be potent: depend nothing upon yourself, but instantly quit his house. You will else be made responsible for every debt that he contracts; and whatever may be his difficulties hereafter, he will know that to extricate himself from them, he has but to talk of dying, and to shew you a sword or a pistol."

"If so, then," said Cecilia, looking down while she spoke, "I suppose I must again go to Mr Delvile's."

This was by no means the purpose of Mr Monckton, who saw not more danger to her fortune with one of her guardians, than to her person with the other. He ventured, there-

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therefore, to recommend to her a reſidence with Mr Briggs, well knowing that his houſe would be a ſecurity againſt her ſeeing any man equal to himſelf, and hoping that under his roof he might again be as unrivalled in her opinion and eſteem, as he formerly was in the country.

But here the oppoſition of Cecilia was too earneſt for any hope that it might be ſurmounted; for, added to her diſlike of Mr Briggs, her repugnance to ſuch an habitation was ſtrongly, though ſilently encreaſed, by her ſecret inclination to return to St James's ſquare.

"I mention not Mr Briggs as an eligible hoſt," ſaid Mr Monckton, after liſtening to her objections, "but merely as one more proper for you than Mr Delvile, with whom your fixing at preſent would be but ill thought of in the world."

"Ill thought of, Sir? Why ſo?"

"Becauſe he has a ſon; for whoſe ſake alone it would be univerſally concluded you changed your abode: and to give any pretence for ſuch a report, would by no means accord with the uſual delicacy of your conduct."

Cecilia was confounded by this ſpeech: the truth of the charge ſhe felt, and the probability of the cenſure ſhe did not dare diſpute.

He then gave her a thouſand exhortations to

to beware of the ſchemes and artifices of Mr Harrel, which he foreſaw would be innumerable. He told her, too, that with reſpect to Sir Robert Floyer, he thought ſhe had better ſuffer the report to ſubſide of itſelf, which in time it muſt neceſſarily do, than give to it ſo much conſequence as to ſend a meſſage to the Baronet, from which he might pretend to infer that hitherto ſhe had been wavering, or ſhe would have ſent to him ſooner.

But the real motive of this advice was, that as he found Sir Robert by no means to be dreaded, he hoped the report, if generally circulated and credited, might keep off other pretenders, and intimidate or deceive young Delvile.

The purport for which Cecilia had wiſhed this conference was, however, wholly unanſwered. Mr Monckton, enraged by the conduct of Mr Harrel, refuſed to talk of his affairs, and could only mention him with deteſtation: but Cecilia, leſs ſevere in her judgment, and more tender in her heart, would not yet give up the hope of an amendment ſhe ſo anxiouſly wiſhed; and having now no other perſon to whom ſhe could apply, determined to conſult with Mr Arnott, whoſe affection for his ſiſter would give him a zeal in the affair that might ſomewhat ſupply the place of ſuperior abilities.

There was, indeed, no time to be loſt in making

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making the projected attempt; for no sooner was the immediate danger of suffering removed, than the alarm wore away, and the penitence was forgotten; every thing went on as usual, no new regulations were made, no expences abated, no pleasures forborn, not a thought of hereafter admitted: and ruinous and terrible as had been the preceding storm, no trace of it was visible in the serenity of the present calm.

An occasion of discussion with Mr Arnott very speedily offered. Mr Harrel said he had observed in the looks of his friends at the Pantheon much surprise at the sight of him, and declared he should take yet another measure for removing all suspicion. This was to give a splendid entertainment at his own house to all his acquaintance, to which he meant to invite every body of any consequence he had ever seen, and almost every body he had ever heard of in his life.

Levity so unfeeling, and a spirit of extravagance so irreclaimable, were hopeless prognostics; yet Cecilia would not desist from her design. She therefore took the earliest opportunity of speaking with Mr Arnott upon the subject, when she openly expressed her uneasiness at the state of his brother's affairs, and warmly acknowledged her displeasure at his dissipated way of life.

Mr Arnott soon shewed that example was all he wanted to declare the same sentiments.

He

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He owned he had long disapproved the conduct of Mr Harrel, and trembled at the situation of his sister. They then considered what it was possible to propose that might retrieve their affairs, and concluded that entirely to quit London for some years, was the only chance that remained of saving them from absolute destruction.

Mr Arnott, therefore, though fearfully, and averse to the task, told his sister their mutual advice. She thanked him, said she was much obliged to him, and would certainly consider his proposal, and mention it to Mr Harrel.—Parties of pleasure, however, intervened, and the promise was neglected.

Cecilia then again spoke herself. Mrs Harrel, much softened by her late acts of kindness, was no longer offended by her interference, but contented herself with confessing that she quite hated the country, and could only bear to live in it in summer time. And when Cecilia very earnestly expostulated on the weakness of such an objection to a step absolutely necessary for her future safety and happiness, she said, *she could do no worse than that if already ruined*, and therefore that she thought *it would be very hard to expect from her such a sacrifice beforehand.*

It was in vain Cecilia remonstrated: Mrs Harrel's love of pleasure was stronger than her understanding; and therefore, though she listened

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liſtened to her with patience, ſhe concluded with the ſame anſwer ſhe had begun.

Cecilia then, though almoſt heartleſs, reſolved upon talking with Mr Harrel himſelf: and therefore, taking an opportunity which he had not time to elude, ſhe ingenuouſly told him her opinion of his danger, and of the manner in which it might be avoided.

He paid unuſual attention to her advice, but ſaid ſhe was much miſtaken with reſpect to his affairs, which he believed he ſhould now very ſpeedily retrieve, as he had had the preceding night an uncommon *run of luck*, and flattered himſelf with being able very ſhortly to pay all his debts, and begin the world again upon a new ſcore.

This open confeſſion of gaming was but a new ſhock to Cecilia, who ſcrupled not to repreſent to him the uncertainty of ſo hazardous a reliance, and the inevitable evils of ſo deſtructive a practice.

She made not, however, the leaſt impreſſion upon his mind; he aſſured her he doubted not giving her ſhortly a good account of himſelf, and that living in the country was a reſource of deſperation which need not be anticipated.

Cecilia, though grieved and provoked by their mutual folly and blindneſs, could proceed no further: advice and admonition ſhe ſpared not, but authority ſhe had none to uſe. She regretted her ineffectual attempt to

Mr

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Mr Arnott, who was yet more cruelly afflicted at it; but though they converſedupon the ſubject by every opportunity, they were equally unable to relate any ſucceſs from their efforts, or to deviſe any plan more likely to enſure it.

CHAP. IV.

A Mistake.

MEAN time young Delvile failed not to honour Cecilia's introduction of him to Mr Harrel, by waiting upon that gentleman as ſoon as the ill effects of his accident at the Pantheon permitted him to leave his own houſe. Mr Harrel, though juſt going out when he called, was deſirous of being upon good terms with his family, and therefore took him up ſtairs to preſent him to his lady, and invited him to tea and cards the next evening.

Cecilia, who was with Mrs Harrel, did not ſee him without emotion; which was not much leſſened by the taſk of thanking him for his aſſiſtance at the Pantheon, and enquiring how he had himſelf fared. No ſign, however, of emotion appeared in return,

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turn, either when he firſt addreſſed, or afterwards anſwered her: the look of ſolicitude with which ſhe had been ſo much ſtruck when they laſt parted was no longer diſcernable, and the voice of ſenſibility which had removed all her doubts, was no longer to be heard. His general eaſe and natural gaiety were again unruffled; and though he had never ſeemed really indifferent to her, there was not the leaſt appearance of any added partiality.

Cecilia felt an involuntary mortification as ſhe obſerved this change; yet, upon reflection, ſhe ſtill attributed his whole behaviour to his miſtake with reſpect to her ſituation, and therefore was but the more gratified by the preference he occaſionally betrayed.

The invitation for the next evening was accepted; and Cecilia, for once, felt no repugnance to joining the company. Young Delvile again was in excellent ſpirits; but though his chief pleaſure was evidently derived from converſing with her, ſhe had the vexation to obſerve that he ſeemed to think her the undoubted property of the Baronet, always retreating when he approached, and as careful, when next her, to yield his place if he advanced, as, when he was diſtant, to guard it from all others.

But when Sir Robert was employed at cards, all ſcruples ceaſing, he neglected not to engroſs her almoſt wholly. He was eager

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to ſpeak to her of the affairs of Mr Belfield, which he told her wore now a better aſpect. The letter, indeed, of recommendation which he had ſhewn to her, had failed, as the nobleman to whom it was written had already entered into an engagement for his ſon; but he had made application elſewhere, which he believed would be ſucceſsful; and he had communicated his proceedings to Mr Belfield, whoſe ſpirits he hoped would recover by this proſpect of employment and advantage. "It is, however, but too true," he added, "that I have rather obtained his conſent to the ſteps I am taking, than his approbation of them: nor do I believe, had I previouſly conſulted him, I ſhould have had even that. Diſappointed in his higher views, his ſpirit is broken, and he is heartleſs and hopeleſs, ſcarce condeſcending to accept relief, from the bitter remembrance that he expected preferment. Time, however, will blunt this acute ſenſibility, and reflection will make him bluſh at this unreaſonable delicacy. But we muſt patiently ſooth him till he is more himſelf; or while we mean to ſerve, we ſhall only torment him. Sickneſs, ſorrow, and poverty have all fallen heavily upon him, and they have all fallen at once: we muſt not, therefore, wonder to find him intractable, when his mind is as much depreſſed, as his body is enervated."

Cecilia, to whom his candour and generoſity

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rosity always gave fresh delight, strengthened his opinions by her concurrence, and confirmed his designs by the interest which she took in them.

From this time, he found almost daily some occasion for calling in Portman-square. The application of Cecilia in favour of Mr Belfield, gave him a right to communicate to her all his proceedings concerning him; and he had some letter to shew, some new scheme to propose, some refusal to lament, or some hope to rejoice over, almost perpetually: or even when these failed, Cecilia had a cold, which he came to enquire after, or Mrs Harrel gave him an invitation, which rendered any excuse unnecessary. But though his intimacy with Cecilia was encreased, though his admiration of her was conspicuous, and his fondness for her society seemed to grow with the enjoyment of it, he yet never manifested any doubt of her engagement with the Baronet, nor betrayed either intention or desire to supplant him. Cecilia, however, repined not much at the mistake, since she thought it might be instrumental to procuring her a more impartial acquaintance with his character, than she could rationally expect, if, as she hoped, the explanation of his error should make him seek her good opinion with more study and design.

To satisfy herself not only concerning the brother but the sister, she again visited Miss Belfield

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Belfield, and had the pleasure of finding her in better spirits, and hearing that the *noble friend* of her brother, whom she had already mentioned, and whom Cecilia had before suspected to be young Delvile, had now pointed out to him a method of conduct by which his affairs might be decently retrieved, and himself creditably employed. Miss Belfield spoke of the plan with the highest satisfaction; yet she acknowledged that her mother was extremely discontented with it, and that her brother himself was rather led by shame than inclination to its adoption. Yet he was evidently easier in his mind, though far from happy, and already so much better, that Mr Rupil said he would very soon be able to leave his room.

Such was the quiet and contented situation of Cecilia, when one evening, which was destined for company at home, while she was alone in the drawing-room, which Mrs Harrel had just left to answer a note, Sir Robert Floyer accidentally came up stairs before the other gentlemen.

"Ha!" cried he, the moment he saw her, "at last have I the good fortune to meet with you alone! This, indeed, is a favour I thought I was always to be denied."

He was then approaching her; but Cecilia, who shrunk involuntary at the sight of him, was retreating hastily to quit the room, when suddenly recollecting that no better opportunity

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portunity might ever offer for a final explanation with him, she irresolutely stopt; and Sir Robert, immediately following, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips as she endeavoured to withdraw it, exclaimed, "You are a most charming creature!" when the door was opened, and young Delvile at the same moment was announced and appeared.

Cecilia, colouring violently, and extremely chagrined, hastily disengaged herself from his hold. Delvile seemed uncertain whether he ought not to retire, which Sir Robert perceiving, bowed to him with an air of mingled triumph and vexation, and said, "Sir, your most obedient!"

The doubt, however, in which every one appeared of what was next to be done, was immediately removed by the return of Mrs Harrel, and the arrival at almost the same moment of more company.

The rest of the evening was spent, on the part of Cecilia, most painfully: the explanation she had planned had ended in worse than nothing, for by suffering the Baronet to detain her, she had rather shewn a disposition to oblige, than any intention to discard him; and the situation in which she had been surprised by young Delvile, was the last to clear the suspicions she so little wished him to harbour: while, on his part, the accident seemed to occasion no other alteration than that of rendering him more than usually assiduous

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duous to give way to Sir Robert whenever he approached her.

Nor was Sir Robert ſlack in taking advantage of this attention: he was highly in ſpirits, talked to her with more than common freedom, and wore the whole evening an air of exulting ſatisfaction.

Cecilia, provoked by this preſumption, hurt by the behaviour of young Delvile, and mortified by the whole affair, determined to leave this miſtake no longer in the power of accident, but to apply immediately to Mr Delvile ſenior, and deſire him, as her guardian, to wait upon Sir Robert himſelf, and acquaint him that his perſeverance in purſuing her was both uſeleſs and offenſive: and by this method ſhe hoped at once to diſſentangle herſelf for ever from the Baronet, and to diſcover more fully the ſentiments of young Delvile: for the provocation ſhe had juſt endured, robbed her of all patience for waiting the advice of Mr Monckton.

CHAP. V.

An Explanation.

THE following morning, therefore, Cecilia went early to St James's-Square:

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and, after the uſual ceremonies of meſſages and long waiting, ſhe was ſhewn into an apartment where ſhe found Mr Delvile and his ſon.

She rejoiced to ſee them together, and determined to make known to them both the purport of her viſit: and therefore, after ſome apologies and a little heſitation, ſhe told Mr Delvile, that encouraged by his offers of ſerving her, ſhe had taken the liberty to call upon him with a view to entreat his aſſiſtance.

Young Delvile, immediately ariſing, would have quitted the room; but Cecilia, aſſuring him ſhe rather deſired what ſhe had to ſay ſhould be known than kept ſecret, begged that he would not diſturb himſelf.

Delvile pleaſed with this permiſſion to hear her, and curious to know what would follow, very readily returned to his ſeat.

"I ſhould by no means," ſhe continued, "have thought of proclaiming even to the moſt intimate of my friends, the partiality which Sir Robert Floyer has been pleaſed to ſhew me, had he left to me the choice of publiſhing or concealing it: but, on the contrary, his own behaviour ſeems intended not merely to diſplay it, but to inſinuate that it meets with my approbation. Mr Harrel, alſo, urged by too much warmth of friendſhip, has encouraged this belief; nor, indeed, do I know at preſent where the miſtake

take ſtops, nor what it is report has not ſcrupled to affirm. But I think I ought no longer to neglect it, and therefore I have preſumed to ſolicit your advice in what manner I may moſt effectually contradict it."

The extreme ſurpriſe of young Delvile at this ſpeech was not more evident than pleaſant to Cecilia, to whom it accounted for all that had perplext her in his conduct, while it animated every expectation ſhe wiſhed to encourage.

"The behaviour of Mr Harrel," anſwered Mr Delvile, "has by no means been ſuch as to lead me to forget that his father was the ſon of a ſteward of Mr Grant, who lived in the neighbourhood of my friend and relation the Duke of Derwent: nor can I ſufficiently congratulate myſelf that I have always declined acting with him. The late Dean, indeed, never committed ſo ſtrange an impropriety as that of nominating Mr Harrel and Mr Briggs coadjutors with Mr Delvile. The impropriety, however, though extremely offenſive to me, has never obliterated from my mind the eſteem I bore the Dean: nor can I poſſibly give a greater proof of it than the readineſs I have always ſhewn to offer my counſel and inſtruction to his niece. Mr Harrel, therefore, ought certainly to have deſired Sir Robert Floyer to acquaint me with his propoſals before he gave to him any anſwer."

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"Undoubtedly, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, willing to ſhorten this parading harangue, "but as he neglected that attention, will you think me too impertinent ſhould I intreat the favour of you to ſpeak with Sir Robert yourſelf, and explain to him the total inefficacy of his purſuit, ſince my determination againſt him is unalterable?"

Here the conference was interrupted by the entrance of a ſervant who ſaid ſomething to Mr Delvile, which occaſioned his apologizing to Cecilia for leaving her for a few moments, and oſtentatiouſly aſſuring her that no buſineſs, however important, ſhould prevent his thinking of her affairs, or detain him from returning to her as ſoon as poſſible.

The aſtoniſhment of young Delvile at the ſtrength of her laſt expreſſion kept him ſilent ſome time after his father left the room: and then, with a countenance that ſtill marked his amazement, he ſaid, "Is it poſſible, Miſs Beverley, that I ſhould twice have been thus egregiouſly deceived; or rather, that the whole town, and even the moſt intimate of your friends, ſhould ſo unaccountably have perſiſted in a miſtake."

"For the town," anſwered Cecilia, "I know not how it can have had any concern in ſo ſmall a matter; but for my intimate friends, I have too few to make it probable they ſhould ever have been ſo ſtrangely miſinformed."

"Pardon

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"Pardon me," cried he, "it was from one who ought to know, that I had myself the intelligence."

"I intreat you, then," said Cecilia, "to acquaint me who it was?"

"Mr Harrel himself; who communicated it to a lady in my hearing, and at a public place."

Cecilia cast up her eyes in wonder and indignation at a proof so incontrovertible of his falsehood, but made not any answer.

"Even yet," continued he, "I can scarcely feel undeceived; your engagement seemed so positive, your connexion so irretrievable,—so,—so *fixed*, I mean.—" He hesitated, a little embarrassed; but then suddenly exclaimed, "Yet whence, if to *neither* favourable, if indifferent alike to Sir Robert and to Belfield, whence that animated apprehension for their safety at the Opera-house? whence that never to be forgotten, *Oh stop him! good God! will nobody stop him!*—Words of anxiety so tender! and sounds that still vibrate in my ear!"

Cecilia, struck with amazement in her turn at the strength of his own expressions, blushed, and for a few minutes hesitated how to answer him: but then, to leave nothing that related to so disagreeable a report in any doubt, she resolved to tell him ingenuously the circumstances that had occasioned her alarm: and therefore, though with some

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pain to her modeſty, ſhe confeſſed her fears that ſhe had herſelf provoked the affront, though her only view had been to diſcountenance Sir Robert, without meaning to ſhew any diſtinction to Mr Belfield.

Delvile, who ſeemed charmed with the candour of this explanation, ſaid, when ſhe had finiſhed it, "You are then at liberty? ——Ah madam!—how many may rue ſo dangerous a diſcovery!"

"Could you think," ſaid Cecilia, endeavouring to ſpeak with her uſual eaſe, "that Sir Robert Floyer would be found ſo irreſiſtible?"

"Oh no!" cried he, "far otherwiſe; a thouſand times I have wondered at his happineſs; a thouſand times, when I have looked at you, and liſtened to you, I have thought it impoſſible!—yet my authority ſeemed indiſputable. And how was I to diſcredit what was not uttered as a conjecture, but aſſerted as a fact? aſſerted, too, by the guardian with whom you lived? and not hinted as a ſecret, but affirmed as a point ſettled?"

"Yet ſurely," ſaid Cecilia, "you have heard me make uſe of expreſſions that could not but lead you to ſuppoſe there was ſome miſtake, whatever might be the authority which had won your belief."

"No," anſwered he, "I never ſuppoſed any miſtake, though ſometimes I thought you

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you repented your engagement. I concluded, indeed, you had been unwarily drawn in, and I have even, at times, been tempted to acknowledge my ſuſpicions to you, ſtate your independence, and exhort you——as a *friend*, exhort you—to uſe it with ſpirit, and, if you were ſhackled unwillingly, incautiouſly, or unworthily, to break the chains by which you were confined, and reſtore to yourſelf that freedom of choice, upon the uſe of which all your happineſs muſt ultimately depend. But I doubted if this were honourable to the Baronet,—and what, indeed, was my right to ſuch a liberty? none that every man might not be proud of, a wiſh to do honour to myſelf, under the officious pretence of ſerving the moſt amiable of women."

"Mr Harrel," ſaid Cecilia, "has been ſo ſtrangely bigotted to his friend, that in his eagerneſs to manifeſt his regard for him, he ſeems to have forgotten every other conſideration; he would not, elſe, have ſpread ſo widely a report that could ſo ill ſtand enquiry."

"If Sir Robert," returned he, "is himſelf deceived while he deceives others, who can forbear to pity him? for my own part, inſtead of repining that hitherto I have been miſtaken, ought I not rather to bleſs an error that may have been my preſervative from danger?"

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Cecilia, diſtreſſed in what manner to ſupport her part in the converſation, began now to wiſh the return of Mr Delvile; and, not knowing what elſe to ſay, ſhe expreſſed her ſurpriſe at his long abſence.

"It is not, indeed, well timed," ſaid young Delvile, "juſt now,—at the moment when—" he ſtopt, and preſently exclaiming "Oh dangerous interval!" he aroſe from his ſeat in manifeſt diſorder.

Cecilia aroſe too, and haſtily ringing the bell, ſaid, "Mr Delvile I am ſure is detained, and therefore I will order my chair, and call another time."

"Do I frighten you away?" ſaid he, aſſuming an appearance more placid.

"No," anſwered ſhe, "but I would not haſten Mr Delvile."

A ſervant then came, and ſaid the chair was ready.

She would immediately have followed him, but young Delvile again ſpeaking, ſhe ſtopt a moment to hear him. "I fear," ſaid he, with much heſitation, "I have ſtrangely expoſed myſelf——and that you cannot—but the extreme aſtoniſhment—" he ſtopt again, in the utmoſt confuſion, and then adding "you will permit me to attend you to the chair," he handed her down ſtairs, and in quitting her, bowed without ſaying a word more.

Cecilia, who was almoſt wholly indifferent

ent to every part of the explanation but that which had actually paſſed, was now in a ſtate of felicity more delightful than any ſhe had ever experienced. She had not a doubt remaining of her influence over the mind of young Delvile, and the ſurpriſe which had made him rather betray than expreſs his regard, was infinitely more flattering and ſatisfactory to her than any formal or direct declaration. She had now convinced him ſhe was diſengaged, and in return, though without ſeeming to intend it, he had convinced her of the deep intereſt which he took in the diſcovery. His perturbation, the words which eſcaped him, and his evident ſtruggle to ſay no more, were proofs juſt ſuch as ſhe wiſhed to receive of his partial admiration, ſince while they ſatisfied her heart, they alſo ſoothed her pride, by ſhewing a diffidence of ſucceſs which aſſured her that her own ſecret was ſtill ſacred, and that no weakneſs or inadvertency on her part had robbed her of the power of mingling dignity with the frankneſs with which ſhe meant to receive his addreſſes. All, therefore, that now employed her care, was to keep off any indiſſoluble engagement till each ſhould be better known to the other.

For this reſerve, however, ſhe had leſs immediate occaſion than ſhe expected; ſhe ſaw no more of young Delvile that day; neither did he appear the next. The third

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ſhe fully expected him,—but ſtill he came not. And while ſhe wondered at an abſence ſo uncommon, ſhe received a note from Lord Ernolf, to beg permiſſion to wait upon her for two minutes, at any time ſhe would appoint.

She readily ſent word that ſhe ſhould be at home for the reſt of the day, as ſhe wiſhed much for an opportunity of immediately finiſhing every affair but one, and ſetting her mind at liberty to think only of that which ſhe deſired ſhould proſper.

Lord Ernolf was with her in half an hour. She found him ſenſible and well-bred, extremely deſirous to promote her alliance with his ſon, and apparently as much pleaſed with herſelf as with her fortune. He acquainted her that he had addreſſed himſelf to Mr Harrel long ſince, but had been informed that ſhe was actually engaged to Sir Robert Floyer: he ſhould, therefore, have forborn taking up any part of her time, had he not, the preceding day, while on a viſit at Mr Delvile's, been aſſured that Mr Harrel was miſtaken, and that ſhe had not yet declared for any body. He hoped, therefore, that ſhe would allow his ſon the honour of waiting upon her, and permit him to talk with Mr Briggs, who he underſtood was her acting guardian, upon ſuch matters as ought to be ſpeedily adjuſted.

Cecilia thanked him for the honour he intended

tended her, and confirmed the truth of the account he had heard in St James's-Square, but at the ſame time told him ſhe muſt decline receiving any viſits from his Lordſhip's ſon, and intreated him to take no meaſure towards the promotion of an affair which never could ſucceed.

He ſeemed much concerned at her anſwer, and endeavoured for ſome time to ſoften her, but found her ſo ſteady, though civil in her refuſal, that he was obliged, however unwillingly, to give up his attempt.

Cecilia, when he was gone, reflected with much vexation on the readineſs of the Delviles to encourage his viſit; ſhe conſidered, however, that the intelligence he had heard might poſſibly be gathered in general converſation; but ſhe blamed herſelf that ſhe had not led to ſome enquiry what part of the family he had ſeen, and who was preſent when the information was given him.

Mean while ſhe found that neither coldneſs, diſtance, nor averſion were ſufficient to repreſs Sir Robert Floyer, who continued to perſecute her with as much confidence of ſucceſs as could have ariſen from the utmoſt encouragement. She again, though with much difficulty, contrived to ſpeak with Mr Harrel upon the ſubject, and openly accuſed him of ſpreading a report abroad, as well as countenancing an expectation at

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home, that had neither truth nor juſtice to ſupport them.

Mr Harrel, with his uſual levity and careleſſneſs, laughed at the charge, but denied any belief in her diſpleaſure, and affected to think ſhe was merely playing the coquet, while Sir Robert was not the leſs her decided choice.

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia reſolved no longer to depend upon any body but herſelf for the management of her own affairs, and therefore, to conclude the buſineſs without any poſſibility of further cavilling, ſhe wrote the following note to Sir Robert herſelf.

To Sir Robert Flover, Bart.

Miss Beverley preſents her compliments to Sir Robert Flover, and as ſhe has ſome reaſon to fear Mr Harrel did not explicitly acquaint him with her anſwer to the commiſſion with which he was entruſted, ſhe thinks it neceſſary, in order to obviate any poſſible miſunderſtanding, to take this method of returning him thanks for the honour of his good opinion, but of begging at the ſame time that he would not loſe a moment upon her account, as her thanks are all ſhe can now, or ever, offer in return.

Portman-Square,
May 11th, 1779.

To

To this note Cecilia received no anſwer: but ſhe had the pleaſure to obſerve that Sir Robert forbore his uſual viſit on the day ſhe ſent it, and, though he appeared again the day following, he never ſpoke to her, and ſeemed ſullen and out of humour.

Yet ſtill young Delvile came not, and ſtill, as her ſurpriſe encreaſed, her tranquility was diminiſhed. She could form no excuſe for his delay, nor conjecture any reaſon for his abſence. Every motive ſeemed to favour his ſeeking, and not one his ſhunning her: the explanation which had ſo lately paſſed had informed him he had no rival to fear, and the manner in which he had heard it aſſured her the information was not indifferent to him; why, then, ſo aſſiduous in his viſits when he thought her engaged, and ſo ſlack in all attendance when he knew ſhe was at liberty?

CHAP. VI.

A MURMURING.

UNABLE to relieve herſelf from this perplexity, Cecilia, to divert her chagrin, again viſited Miſs Belfield. She had then

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then the pleaſure to hear that her brother was much recovered, and had been able, the preceding day, to take an airing, which he had borne ſo well that Mr Rupil had charged him to uſe the ſame exerciſe every morning.

"And will he?" ſaid Cecilia.

"No, madam, I am ſadly afraid not," ſhe anſwered, "for coach-hire is very expenſive, and we are willing, now, to ſave all we can in order to help fitting him out for going abroad."

Cecilia then earneſtly entreated her to accept ſome aſſiſtance; but ſhe aſſured her ſhe did not dare without the conſent of her mother, which, however, ſhe undertook to obtain.

The next day, when Cecilia called to hear her ſucceſs, Mrs Belfield, who hitherto had kept out of ſight, made her appearance. She found her, alike in perſon, manners and converſation, a coarſe and ordinary woman, not more unlike her ſon in talents and acquired accompliſhments, than diſſimilar to her daughter in ſoftneſs and natural delicacy.

The moment Cecilia was ſeated, ſhe began, without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any ſolicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs, and repiningly to relate her misfortunes.

"I find, madam," ſhe ſaid, "you have been ſo kind as to viſit my daughter Henny a great many times, but as I have no time for

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for company, I have always kept out of the way, having other things to do than ſit ſtill to talk. I have had a ſad time of it here, ma'am, with my poor ſon's illneſs, having no conveniencies about me, and much ado to make him mind me; for he's all for having his own way, poor dear ſoul; and I'm ſure I don't know who could contradict him, for it's what I never had the heart to do. But then, ma'am, what is to come of it? You ſee how bad things go! for though I have got a very good income, it won't do for every thing. And if it was as much again, I ſhould want to ſave it all now. For here my poor ſon, you ſee, is reduced all in a minute, as one may ſay, from being one of the firſt gentlemen in the town, to a mere poor object, without a farthing in the world!"

"He is, however, I hope, now much better in his health?" ſaid Cecilia.

"Yes, madam, thank heaven, for if he was worſe, thoſe might tell of it that would, for I'm ſure I ſhould never live to hear of it. He has been the beſt ſon in the world, madam, and uſed nothing but the beſt company, for I ſpared neither pains nor coſt to bring him up genteelly, and I believe there's not a nobleman in the land that looks more the gentleman. However, there's come no good of it, for though his acquaintances was all among the firſt quality, he never received the

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the value of a penny from the beſt of them. So I have no great need to be proud. But I meant for the beſt, though I have often enough wiſhed I had not meddled in the matter, but left him to be brought up in the ſhop, as his father was before him."

"His preſent plan, however," ſaid Cecilia, "will I hope make you ample amends both for your ſufferings and your tenderneſs."

"What, madam, when he's going to leave me, and ſettle in foreign parts? If you was a mother yourſelf, madam, you would not think that ſuch good amends."

"Settle?" ſaid Cecilia, "No, he only goes for a year or two."

"That's more than I can ſay, madam, or any body elſe; and nobody knows what may happen in that time. And how I ſhall keep myſelf up when he's beyond ſeas, I am ſure I don't know, for he has always been the pride of my life, and every penny I ſaved for him, I thought to have been paid in pounds."

"You will ſtill have your daughter, and ſhe ſeems ſo amiable, that I am ſure you can want no conſolation ſhe will not endeavour to give you."

"But what is a daughter, madam, to ſuch a ſon as mine? a ſon that I thought to have ſeen living like a prince, and ſending his own coach for me to dine with him! And now he's going to be taken away from me,

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me, and nobody knows if I ſhall live till he comes back. But I may thank myſelf, for if I had but been content to ſee him brought up in the ſhop——yet all the world would have cried ſhame upon it, for when he was quite a child in arms, the people uſed all to ſay he was born to be a gentleman, and would live to make many a fine lady's heart ache."

"If he can but make *your* heart eaſy," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "we will not grieve that the fine ladies ſhould eſcape the prophecy."

"O, ma'am, I don't mean by that to ſay he has been over gay among the ladies, for it's a thing I never heard of him; and I dare ſay if any lady was to take a fancy to him, ſhe'd find there was not a modeſter young man in the world. But you muſt needs think what a hardſhip it is to me to have him turn out ſo unlucky, after all I have done for him, when I thought to have ſeen him at the top of the tree, as one may ſay!"

"He will yet, I hope," ſaid Cecilia, "make you rejoice in all your kindneſs to him: his health is already returning, and his affairs wear again a more proſperous aſpect."

"But do you ſuppoſe, ma'am, that having him ſent two or three hundred miles away from me, with ſome young maſter to take care of, is the way to make up to me what I have gone through for him? why I uſed to deny

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deny myself every thing in the world, in order to save money to buy him smart clothes, and let him go to the Opera, and Ranelagh, and such sort of places, that he might keep himself in fortune's way! and now you see the end of it! here he is, in a little shabby room up two pair of stairs, with not one of the great folks coming near him, to see if he's so much as dead or alive."

"I do not wonder," said Cecilia, "that you resent their shewing so little gratitude for the pleasure and entertainment they have formerly received from him: but comfort yourself that it will at least secure you from any similar disappointment, as Mr Belfield will, in future, be guarded from forming such precarious expectations."

"But what good will that do me, ma'am, for all the money he has been throwing after them all this while? do you think I would have scraped it up for him, and gone without every thing in the world, to see it all end in this manner? why he might as well have been brought up the commonest journeyman for any comfort I shall have of him at this rate. And suppose he should be drowned in going beyond seas, what am I to do then?"

"You must not," said Cecilia, "indulge such fears; I doubt not but your son will return well, and return all that you wish."

"Nobody knows that, ma'am; and the only way to be certain is for him not to go at all;

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all; and I'm surprised, ma'am, you can wish him to make such a journey to nobody knows where, with nothing but a young master that he must as good as teach his A. B. C. all the way they go."

"Certainly," said Cecilia, amazed at this accusation, "I should not wish him to go abroad, if any thing more eligible could be done by his remaining in England: but as no prospect of that sort seems before him, you must endeavour to reconcile yourself to parting with him."

"Yes, but how am I to do that, when I don't know if ever I shall see him again? Who could have thought of his living so among the great folks, and then coming to want! I'm sure I thought they'd have provided for him like a son of their own, for he used to go about to all the public places just as they did themselves. Day after day I used to be counting for when he would come to tell me he'd got a place at court, or something of that sort, for I never could tell what it would be: and then the next news I heard, was that he was shut up in this poor bit of a place, with nobody troubling their heads about him! however, I'll never be persuaded but he might have done better, if he would but have spoke a good word for himself, or else have let me done it for him: instead of which, he never would so much as let me see any of his grand friends, though I would not

not have made the leaſt ſcruple in the world to have aſked them for any thing he had a mind to."

Cecilia again endeavoured to give her comfort; but finding her only ſatisfaction was to expreſs her diſcontent, ſhe aroſe to take leave. But, turning firſt to Miſs Belfield, contrived to make a private enquiry whether ſhe might repeat her offer of aſſiſtance. A downcaſt and dejected look anſwering in the affirmative, ſhe put into her hand a ten pound bank note, and wiſhing them good morning, hurried out of the room.

Miſs Belfield was running after her, but ſtopt by her mother, who called out, "What is it?—How much is it?——Let me look at it!"—And then, following Cecilia herſelf, ſhe thanked her aloud all the way down ſtairs for her *genteelneſs*, aſſuring her ſhe would not fail making it known to her ſon.

Cecilia at this declaration turned back, and exhorted her by no means to mention it; after which ſhe got into her chair, and returned home; pitying Miſs Belfield for the unjuſt partiality ſhewn to her brother, and excuſing the proud ſhame he had manifeſted of his relations, from the vulgarity and ſelfiſhneſs of her who was at the head of them.

Almoſt a fortnight had now elapſed ſince her explanation with young Delvile, yet not once had he been in Portman-ſquare, though

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in the fortnight which had preceded, ſcarce a day had paſſed which had not afforded him ſome pretence for calling there.

At length a note arrived from Mrs Delvile. It contained the moſt flattering reproaches for her long abſence, and a preſſing invitation that ſhe would dine and ſpend the next day with her.

Cecilia, who had merely denied herſelf the pleaſure of this viſit from an apprehenſion of ſeeming too deſirous of keeping up the connexion, now, from the ſame ſenſe of propriety, determined upon making it, wiſhing equally to avoid all appearance of conſciouſneſs, either by ſeeking or avoiding the intimacy of the family.

Not a little was her anxiety to know in what manner young Delvile would receive her, whether he would be grave or gay, agitated, as during their laſt converſation, or eaſy, as in the meetings which had preceded it.

She found Mrs Delvile, however, alone; and extremely kind to her, yet much ſurpriſed, and half diſpleaſed, that ſhe had ſo long been abſent. Cecilia, though ſomewhat diſtreſſed what excuſes to offer, was happy to find herſelf ſo highly in favour, and not very reluctant to promiſe more frequent viſits in future.

They were then ſummoned to dinner; but ſtill no young Delvile was viſible: they were joined

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joined only by his father, and she found that no one else was expected.

Her astonishment now was greater than ever, and she could account by no possible conjecture for a conduct so extraordinary. Hitherto, whenever she had visited in St James's-Square by appointment, the air with which he had received her, constantly announced that he had impatiently waited her arrival; he had given up other engagements to stay with her, he had openly expressed his hopes that she would never be long absent, and seemed to take a pleasure in her society to which every other was inferior. And now how striking the difference! he forbore all visits at the house where she resided, he even flew from his own when he knew she was approaching it!

Nor was this the only vexation of which this day was productive; Mr Delvile, when the servants were withdrawn after dinner, expressed some concern that he had been called from her during their last conversation, and added that he would take the present opportunity to talk with her upon some matters of importance.

He then began the usual parading prelude, which, upon all occasions, he thought necessary, in order to enhance the value of his interposition, remind her of her inferiority, and impress her with a deeper sense of the honour which his guardianship conferred upon

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upon her: after which he proceeded to make a formal enquiry, whether she had positively dismissed Sir Robert Floyer?

She assured him she had.

"I understood my Lord Ernolf," said he, "that you had totally discouraged the addresses of his son?"

"Yes, Sir," answered Cecilia, "for I never mean to receive them."

"Have you, then, any other engagement?"

"No, Sir," cried she, colouring between shame and displeasure, "none at all."

"This is a very extraordinary circumstance!" replied he: "the son of an earl to be rejected by a young woman of no family, and yet no reason assigned for it!"

This contemptuous speech so cruelly shocked Cecilia, that though he continued to harangue her for a great part of the afternoon, she only answered him when compelled by some question, and was so evidently discomposed, that Mrs Delvile, who perceived her uneasiness with much concern, redoubled her civilities and caresses, and used every method in her power to oblige and enliven her.

Cecilia was not ungrateful for her care, and shewed her sense of it by added respect and attention; but her mind was disturbed, and she quitted the house as soon as she was able.

Mr Delvile's speech, from her previous knowledge of the extreme haughtiness of his character,

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character would not have occaſioned her the ſmalleſt emotion, had it merely related to him or to herſelf: but as it concerned Lord Ernolf, ſhe regarded it as alſo concerning his ſon; and ſhe found that, far from trying to promote the union Mr Monckton had told her he had planned, he did not ſeem even to think of it, but, on the contrary, propoſed and ſeconded with all his intereſt another alliance.

This, added to the behaviour of young Delvile, made her ſuſpect that ſome engagement was in agitation on his own part, and that while ſhe thought him ſo ſedulous only to avoid her, he was ſimply occupied in ſeeking another. This painful ſuggeſtion, which every thing ſeemed to confirm, again overſet all her ſchemes, and deſtroyed all her viſionary happineſs. Yet how to reconcile it with what had paſſed at their laſt meeting ſhe knew not; ſhe had then every reaſon to believe that his heart was in her power, and that courage, or an opportunity more ſeaſonable, was all he wanted to make known his devotion to her; why, then, ſhun if he loved her? why, if he loved her not, ſeem ſo perturbed at the explanation of her independence?

A very little time, however, ſhe hoped would unravel this myſtery; in two days, the entertainment which Mr Harrel had planned, to deceive the world by an appearance of affluence

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affluence to which he had loſt all title, was to take place; young Delvile, in common with every other perſon who had ever been ſeen at the houſe, had early received an invitation, which he had readily promiſed to accept ſome time before the converſation that ſeemed the period of their acquaintance had paſſed. Should he, after being ſo long engaged, fail to keep his appointment, ſhe could no longer have any doubt of the juſtice of her conjecture; ſhould he, on the contrary, again appear, from his behaviour and his looks ſhe might perhaps be able to gather why he had ſo long been abſent.

CHAP. VII.

A ROUT.

THE day at length arrived of which the evening and the entrance of company were, for the firſt time, as eagerly wiſhed by Cecilia as by her diſſipated hoſt and hoſteſs. No expence and no pains had been ſpared to render this long projected entertainment ſplendid and elegant; it was to begin with a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, and ſucceeded by a ſupper.

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Cecilia, though unuſually anxious about her own affairs, was not ſo engroſſed by them as to behold with indifference a ſcene of ſuch unjuſtifiable extravagance; it contributed to render her thoughtful and uneaſy, and to deprive her of all mental power of participating in the gaiety of the aſſembly. Mr Arnott was yet more deeply affected by the mad folly of the ſcheme, and received from the whole evening no other ſatisfaction than that which a look of ſympathetic concern from Cecilia occaſionally afforded him.

Till nine o'clock no company appeared, except Sir Robert Floyer, who ſtayed from dinner time, and Mr Morrice, who having received an invitation for the evening, was ſo much delighted with the permiſſion to again enter the houſe, that he made uſe of it between ſix and ſeven o'clock, and before the family had left the dining parlour. He apologized with the utmoſt humility to Cecilia for the unfortunate accident at the Pantheon; but as to her it had been productive of nothing but pleaſure, by exciting in young Delvile the moſt flattering alarm for her ſafety, ſhe found no great difficulty in according him her pardon.

Among thoſe who came in the firſt crowd was Mr Monckton, who, had he been equally unconſcious of ſiniſter views, would, in following his own inclinations, have been as early in his attendance as Mr Morrice; but

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but who, to obviate all ſuſpicious remarks, conformed to the faſhionable tardineſs of the times.

Cecilia's chief apprehenſion for the evening was that Sir Robert Floyer would aſk her to dance with him, which ſhe could not refuſe without ſitting ſtill during the ball, nor accept, after the reports ſhe knew to be ſpread, without ſeeming to give a public ſanction to them. To Mr Monckton therefore, innocently conſidering him as a married man and her old friend, ſhe frankly told her diſtreſs, adding, by way of excuſe for the hint, that the partners were to be changed every two dances.

Mr Monckton, though his principal ſtudy was carefully to avoid all public gallantry or aſſiduity towards Cecilia, had not the forbearance to reſiſt this intimation, and therefore ſhe had the pleaſure of telling Sir Robert, when he aſked the honour of her hand for the two firſt dances, that ſhe was already engaged.

She then expected that he would immediately ſecure her for the two following; but, to her great joy, he was ſo much piqued by the evident pleaſure with which ſhe announced her engagement, that he proudly walked away without adding another word.

Much ſatisfied with this arrangement, and not without hopes that, if ſhe was at liberty when he arrived, ſhe might be applied to by

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young Delvile, she now endeavoured to procure herself a place in the music room.

This, with some difficulty, she effected; but though there was an excellent concert, in which several capital performers played and sung, she found it impossible to hear a note, as she chanced to be seated just by Miss Leeson, and two other young ladies, who were paying one another compliments upon their dress and their looks, settling to dance in the same cotillon, guessing who would begin the minuets, and wondering there were not more gentlemen. Yet, in the midst of this unmeaning conversation, of which she remarked that Miss Leeson bore the principal part, not one of them failed, from time to time, to exclaim with great rapture "*What sweet music?*—" "*Oh how charming!*" "*Did you ever hear any thing so delightful?*—"

"Ah," said Cecilia to Mr Gosport, who now approached her, "but for your explanatory observations, how much would the sudden loquacity of this *supercilious* lady, whom I had imagined all but dumb, have perplext me!"

"Those who are most silent to strangers," answered Mr Gosport, "commonly talk most fluently to their inmates, for they are deeply in arrears, and eager to pay off their debts. Miss Leeson now is in her proper set, and therefore appears in her natural character: and the poor girl's joy in being able to utter all

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all the nothings she has painfully hoarded while separated from her coterie, gives to her now the wild transport of a bird just let loose from a cage. I rejoice to see the little creature at liberty, for what can be so melancholy as a forced appearance of thinking, where there are no materials for such an occupation?"

Soon after, Miss Larolles, who was laughing immoderately, contrived to crowd herself into their party, calling out to them, "O you have had the greatest loss in the world! if you had but been in the next room just now!—there's the drollest figure there you can conceive: enough to frighten one to look at him." And presently she added "O Lord, if you stoop a little this way, you may see him!"

Then followed a general tittering, accompanied with exclamations of "Lord, what a fright!" "It's enough to kill one with laughing to look at him!" "Did you ever see such a horrid creature in your life?" And soon after, one of them screamed out "O Lord, see!—he's grinning at Miss Beverley!"

Cecilia then turned her head towards the door, and there, to her own as well as her neighbours amazement, she perceived Mr Briggs! who, in order to look about him at his ease, was standing upon a chair, from which, having singled her out, he was re-

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garding her with a facetious ſmirk, which, when it caught her eye, was converted into a familiar nod.

She returned his ſalutation, but was not much charmed to obſerve, that preſently deſcending from his exalted poſt, which had moved the wonder and riſibility of all the company, he made a motion to approach her; for which purpoſe, regardleſs of either ladies or gentlemen in his way, he ſturdily puſhed forward, with the ſame unconcerned hardineſs he would have forced himſelf through a crowd in the ſtreet; and taking not the ſmalleſt notice of their frowns, ſupplications that he would ſtand ſtill, and exclamations of "Pray, Sir!"—"Lord, how troubleſome!" and "Sir, I do aſſure you here's no room!" he fairly and adroitly elbowed them from him till he reached her ſeat: and then, with a waggiſh grin, he looked round, to ſhew he had got the better and to ſee whom he had diſcompoſed.

When he had enjoyed this triumph, he turned to Cecilia, and chucking her under the chin, ſaid "Well, my little duck, how goes it? got to you at laſt; ſqueezed my way; would not be nicked; warrant I'll mob with the beſt of them! Look here! all in a heat!—hot as the dog-days."

And then, to the utter conſternation of the company, he took off his wig to wipe his head!—which occaſioned ſuch univerſal horrour,

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horrour, that all who were near the door escaped into other apartments, while those who were too much enclosed for flight, with one accord turned away their heads.

Captain Aresby, being applied to by some of the ladies to remonstrate upon this unexampled behaviour, advanced to him, and said "I am quite *abimé*, Sir, to incommode you, but the commands of the ladies are insuperable. Give me leave Sir, to entreat that you would put on your wig."

"My wig?" cried he, "ay, ay, shall in a moment, only want to wipe my head first."

"I am quite *assommé*, Sir," returned the Captain, "to disturb you, but I must really hint you don't comprehend me: the ladies are extremely inconvenienced by these sort of sights, and we make it a principle they should never be *accablées* with them."

"Anan!" cried Mr Briggs, staring.

"I say, Sir," replied the Captain, "the ladies are quite *au desespoir* that you will not cover your head."

"What for?" cried he, "what's the matter with my head? ne'er a man here got a better! very good stuff in it: won't change it with ne'er a one of you!"

And then, half unconscious of the offence he had given, and half angry at the rebuke he had received, he leisurely compleated his design, and again put on his wig, settling it to his face with as much composure as if he

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had performed the operation in his own dreſſing-room.

The Captain having gained his point, walked away, making, however, various grimaces of diſguſt, and whiſpering from ſide to ſide "he's the moſt petrifying fellow I ever was *obſĕde* by!"

Mr Briggs then, with much deriſion, and ſundry diſtortions of countenance, liſtened to an Italian ſong: after which, he buſtled back to the outer apartment, in ſearch of Cecilia, who, aſhamed of ſeeming a party in the diſturbance he had excited, had taken the opportunity of his diſpute with the Captain to run into the next room; where, however, he preſently found her, while ſhe was giving an account to Mr Goſport of her connexion with him, to which Morrice, ever curious and eager to know what was going forward, was alſo liſtening.

"Ah, little chick!" cried he, "got to you again! ſoon out-joſtle thoſe jemmy ſparks! But where's the ſupper? ſee nothing of the ſupper! Time to go to bed,—ſuppoſe there is none; all a take-in; nothing but a little piping."

"Supper, Sir?" cried Cecilia; "the Concert is not over yet. Was ſupper mentioned in your card of invitation?"

"Ay, to be ſure, ſhould not have come elſe. Don't viſit often; always coſts money. Wiſh I had not come now; wore a hole

hole in my ſhoe; hardly a crack in it before."

"Why you did not walk, Sir?"

"Did, did; why not? Might as well have ſtayed away though; daubed my beſt coat, like to have ſpoilt it."

"So much the better for the taylors, Sir," ſaid Morrice, pertly, "for then you muſt have another."

"Another! what for? ha'n't had this ſeven years; juſt as good as new."

"I hope," ſaid Cecilia, "you had not another fall?"

"Worſe, worſe; like to have loſt my bundle."

"What bundle, Sir?"

"Beſt coat and waiſtcoat; brought 'em in my handkerchief, purpoſe to ſave them. When will Mr Harrel do as much?"

"But had you no apprehenſions, Sir," ſaid Mr Goſport drily, "that the handkerchief would be the ſooner worn out for having a knot tied in it?"

"Took care of that, tied it ſlack. Met an unlucky boy: little dog gave it a pluck; knot ſlipt; coat and waiſtcoat popt out."

"But what became of the boy, Sir?" cried Morrice, "I hope he got off?"

"Could not run for laughing; caught him in a minute; gave him ſomething to laugh for; drubbed him ſoundly."

"O poor fellow!" cried Morrice with a

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loud hollow, "I am really ſorry for him. But pray, Sir, what became of your beſt coat and waiſtcoat while you gave him this drubbing? did you leave them in the dirt?"

"No, Mr Nincompoop," anſwered Briggs angrily, "I put them on a ſtall."

"That was a perilous expedient, Sir," ſaid Mr Goſport, "and I ſhould fear might be attended with ill conſequences, for the owner of the ſtall would be apt to expect ſome little *douceur*. How did you manage, Sir?"

"Bought a halfpenny worth of apples. Serve for ſupper to-morrow night."

"But how, Sir, did you get your cloaths dried, or cleaned?"

"Went to an alehouſe; coſt me half a pint."

"And pray, Sir," cried Morrice, "where, at laſt, did you make your toilette?"

"Sha'n't tell, ſha'n't tell; aſk no more queſtions. What ſignifies where a man ſlips on a coat and waiſtcoat?"

"Why, Sir, this will prove an expenſive expedition to you," ſaid Mr Goſport, very gravely, "Have you caſt up what it may coſt you?"

"More than it's worth, more than it's worth," anſwered he pettiſhly; "ha'n't laid out ſo much in pleaſure theſe five years."

"Ha! ha!" cried Morrice, hallowing aloud,

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aſoud, why it can't be more than ſixpence in all!"

"Sixpence?" repeated he ſcornfully, "if you don't know the value of ſixpence, you'll never be worth fivepence three farthings. How do think got rich, hay?—by wearing fine coats, and frizzling my pate? No, no; Maſter Harrel for that! aſk him if he'll caſt an account with me!—never knew a man worth a penny with ſuch a coat as that on."

Morrice again laughed, and again Mr Briggs reproved him; and Cecilia, taking advantage of the ſquabble, ſtole back to the muſick-room.

Here, in a few minutes, Mrs Panton, a lady who frequently viſited at the houſe, approached Cecilia, followed by a gentleman, whom ſhe had never before ſeen, but who was ſo evidently charmed with her, that he had looked at no other object ſince his entrance into the houſe.

Mrs Panton, preſenting him to her by the name of Mr Marriot, told her he had begged her interceſſion for the honour of her hand in the two firſt dances: and the moment ſhe anſwered that ſhe was already engaged, the ſame requeſt was made for the two following. Cecilia had then no excuſe, and was therefore obliged to accept him.

The hope ſhe had entertained in the early part of the evening, was already almoſt wholly extinguiſhed! Delvile appeared not!

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though her eye watched the entrance of every new viſitor, and her vexation made her believe that he alone, of all the town, was abſent.

When the Concert was over, the company joined promiſcuouſly for chat and refreſhments before the ball; and Mr Goſport advanced to Cecilia, to relate a ridiculous diſpute which had juſt paſſed berween Mr Briggs and Morrice.

"You, Mr Goſport," ſaid Cecilia, "who ſeem to make the *minutiæ* of abſurd characters your ſtudy, can explain to me, perhaps, why Mr Briggs ſeems to have as much pleaſure in proclaiming his meanneſs, as in boaſting his wealth?"

"Becauſe," anſwered Mr Goſport, "he knows them, in his own affairs, to be ſo nearly allied, that but for practiſing the one, he had never poſſeſſed the other; ignorant, therefore, of all diſcrimination,——except, indeed, of pounds, ſhillings and pence!—he ſuppoſes them neceſſarily inſeparable, becauſe with him they were united. What you, however, call meanneſs, he thinks wiſdom, and recollects, therefore, not with ſhame but with triumph, the various little arts and ſubterfuges, by which his coffers have been filled."

Here Lord Ernolf, concluding Cecilia ſtill diſengaged from ſeeing her only diſcourſe with Mr Goſport and Mr Monckton, one of whom

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whom was old enough to be her father, and the other was a *married man*, advanced, and preſenting to her Lord Derford, his ſon, a youth not yet of age, ſolicited for him the honour of her hand as his partner.

Cecilia, having a double excuſe, eaſily declined this propoſal; Lord Ernolf, however, was too earneſt to be repulſed, and told her he ſhould again try his intereſt when her two preſent engagements were fulfilled. Hopeleſs, now, of young Delvile, ſhe heard this intimation with indifference; and was accompanying Mr Monckton into the ball-room, when Miſs Larolles, flying towards her with an air of infinite eagerneſs, caught her hand, and ſaid in a whiſper "pray let me wiſh you joy!"

"Certainly!" ſaid Cecilia, "but pray let me aſk you of what?"

"O Lord now," anſwered ſhe, "I am ſure you know what I mean; but you muſt know I have a prodigious monſtrous great favour to beg of you: now pray don't refuſe me; I aſſure you if you do, I ſhall be ſo mortified you've no notion."

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing but to let me be one of your bride maids. I aſſure you I ſhall take it as the greateſt favour in the world."

"My bride maid!" cried Cecilia; "but do you not think the bridegroom himſelf will

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will be rather offended to find a bridemaid appointed, before he is even thought of?"

"O pray, now," cried she, "don't be ill-natured, for if you are, you've no idea how I shall be disappointed. Only conceive what happened to me three weeks ago! you must know I was invited to Miss Clinton's wedding, and so I made up a new dress on purpose, in a very particular sort of shape, quite of my own invention, and it had the sweetest effect you can conceive; well, and when the time came, do you know her mother happened to die! Never any thing was so excessive unlucky, for now she won't be married this half year, and my dress will be quite old and yellow; for it's all white, and the most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life."

"Upon my word you are very obliging!" cried Cecilia laughing; "and pray do you make interest regularly round with all your female acquaintance to be married upon this occasion, or am I the only one your think this distress will work upon?"

"Now how excessive teazing!" cried Miss Larolles, "when you know so well what I mean, and when all the town knows as well as myself."

Cecilia then seriously enquired, whether she had really any meaning at all?

"Lord yes," answered she, "you know I mean

mean about Sir Robert Floyer: for I'm told you've quite refuſed Lord Derford."

"And are you alſo told that I have accepted Sir Robert Floyer?"

"O dear yes!—the jewels are bought, and the equipages are built; it's quite a ſettled thing, I know very well."

Cecilia then very gravely began an attempt to undeceive her; but the dancing beginning alſo at the ſame time, ſhe ſtayed not to hear her, hurrying, with a beating heart, to the place of action. Mr Monckton and his fair partner then followed, mutually exclaiming againſt Mr Harrel's impenetrable conduct; of which Cecilia, however, in a ſhort time ceaſed wholly to think, for as ſoon as the firſt cotillon was over, ſhe perceived young Delvile juſt walking into the room.

Surpriſe, pleaſure, and confuſion aſſailed her all at once; ſhe had entirely given up her expectation of ſeeing him, and an abſence ſo determined had led her to conclude he had purſuits which ought to make her join in wiſhing it lengthened; but now he appeared, that concluſion, with the fears that gave riſe to it, vaniſhed; and ſhe regretted nothing but the unfortunate ſucceſſion of engagements which would prevent her dancing with him at all, and probably keep off all converſation with him till ſupper time.

She ſoon, however, perceived a change in his air and behaviour that extremely aſtoniſhed

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niſhed her: he looked grave and thoughtful, ſaluted her at a diſtance, ſhewed no ſign of any intention to approach her, regarded the dancing and dancers as a public ſpectacle in which he had no chance of perſonal intereſt, and ſeemed wholly altered, not merely with reſpect to her, but to himſelf, as his former eagerneſs for her ſociety was not more abated than his former general gaiety.

She had no time, however, for comments, as ſhe was preſently called to the ſecond cotillon; but the confuſed and unpleaſant ideas which, without waiting for time or reflection, crowded upon her imagination on obſerving his behaviour, were not more depreſſing to herſelf, than obvious to her partner; Mr Monckton by the change in her countenance firſt perceived the entrance of young Delvile, and by her apparent emotion and uneaſineſs, readily penetrated into the ſtate of her mind; he was confirmed that her affections were engaged; he ſaw, too, that ſhe was doubtful with what return.

The grief with which he made the firſt diſcovery, was ſomewhat leſſened by the hopes he conceived from the ſecond; yet the evening was to him as painful as to Cecilia, ſince he now knew that whatever proſperity might ultimately attend his addreſs and aſſiduity, her heart was not her own to beſtow; and that even were he ſure of young Delvile's indifference, and actually at liberty to make pro-

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propoſals for himſelf, the time of being firſt in her eſteem was at an end, and the long-earned good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined by the ſudden impreſſion of a lively ſtranger, without trouble to himſelf, and perhaps without pleaſure!

Reflections ſuch as theſe wholly embittered the delight he had promiſed himſelf from dancing with her, and took from him all power to combat the anxiety with which ſhe was ſeized: when the ſecond cotillon, therefore, was over, inſtead of following her to a ſeat, or taking the privilege of his preſent ſituation to converſe with her, the jealouſy riſing in his breaſt robbed him of all ſatisfaction, and gave to him no other deſire than to judge its juſtice by watching her motions at a diſtance.

Mean while Cecilia, inattentive whether he accompanied or quitted her, proceeded to the firſt vacant ſeat. Young Delvile was ſtanding near it, and, in a ſhort time, but rather as if he could not avoid than as if he wiſhed it, he came to enquire how ſhe did.

The ſimpleſt queſtion, in the then ſituation of her mind, was ſufficient to confuſe her, and though ſhe anſwered, ſhe hardly knew what he had aſked. A minute's recollection, however, reſtored an apparent compoſure, and ſhe talked to him of Mrs Delvile, with her uſual partial regard for that lady,

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lady, and with an earneſt endeavour to ſeem unconſcious of any alteration in his behaviour.

Yet, to him, even this trifling and general converſation was evidently painful, and he looked relieved by the approach of Sir Robert Floyer, who ſoon after joined them.

At this time a young lady who was ſitting by Cecilia, called to a ſervant who was paſſing, for a glaſs of lemonade: Cecilia deſired he would bring her one alſo; but Delvile, not ſorry to break off the diſcourſe, ſaid he would himſelf be her cup-bearer, and for that purpoſe went away.

A moment after, the ſervant returned with ſome lemonade to Cecilia's neighbour, and Sir Robert, taking a glaſs from him, brought it to Cecilia at the very inſtant young Delvile came with another.

"I think I am before-hand with you, Sir," ſaid the inſolent Baronet.

"No, Sir," anſwered young Delvile, "I think we were both in together: Miſs Beverley, however, is ſteward of the race, and we muſt ſubmit to her deciſion."

"Well, madam," cried Sir Robert, "here we ſtand, waiting your pleaſure. Which is to be the happy man!"

"Each, I hope," anſwered Cecilia, with admirable preſence of mind, "ſince I expect no leſs than that you will both do me the honour of drinking my health."

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This little contrivance, which ſaved her alike from ſhewing favour or giving offence, could not but be applauded by both parties: and while they obeyed her orders, ſhe took a third glaſs herſelf from the ſervant.

While this was paſſing, Mr Briggs, again perceiving her, ſtumpt haſtily towards her, calling out "Ah ah! my duck! what's that: got ſomething nice? Come here, my lad, taſte it myſelf."

He then took a glaſs, but having only put it to his mouth, made a wry face, and returned it, ſaying "Bad! bad! poor punch indeed!—not a drop of rum in it!"

"So much the better, Sir," cried Morrice, who diverted himſelf by following him, "for then you ſee the maſter of the houſe ſpares in ſomething, and you ſaid he ſpared in nothing."

"Don't ſpare in fools!" returned Mr Briggs, "keep them in plenty."

"No, Sir, nor in any out of the way characters," anſwered Morrice.

"So much the worſe," cried Briggs, "ſo much the worſe! Eat him out of houſe and home; won't leave him a rag to his back, nor a penny in his pocket. Never mind 'em, my little duck; mind none of your guardians but me: t'other two a'n't worth a ruſh."

Cecilia, ſomewhat aſhamed of this ſpeech, looked towards young Delvile, in whom it occa-

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occaſioned the firſt ſmile ſhe had ſeen that evening.

"Been looking about for you!" continued Briggs, nodding ſagaciouſly; "believe I've found one will do. Gueſs what I mean;--100,000*l.*—hay?--what ſay to that? anything better at the weſt end of the town?"

"100,000*l.*" cried Morrice, "and pray, Sir, who may this be?"

"Not you, Mr jackanapes! ſure of that. A'n't quite poſitive he'll have you, neither. Think he will, though."

"Pray, Sir, what age is he?" cried the never daunted Morrice.

"Why about—let's ſee—don't know, never heard—what ſignifies?"

"But, Sir, he's an old man, I ſuppoſe, by being ſo rich?"

"Old? no, no ſuch thing; about my own ſtanding."

"What, Sir, and do you propoſe him for an huſband to Miſs Beverley?"

"Why not? know ever a one warmer? think Maſter Harrel will get her a better; or t'other old Don, in the grand ſquare?"

"If you pleaſe, Sir," cried Cecilia haſtily, "we will talk of this matter another time."

"No, pray," cried young Delvile, who could not forbear laughing, "let it be diſcuſſed now."

"Hate 'em," continued Mr Briggs, "hate

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" hate 'em both! one ſpending more than he's worth, cheated and over-reached by fools, running into goal to pleaſe a parcel of knaves: t'other counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names inſtead of caſh, caſting up more couſins than guineas—"

Again Cecilia endeavoured to ſilence him, but, only chucking her under the chin, he went on, " Ay, ay, my little duck, never mind 'em; one of them i'n't worth a penny, and t'other has nothing in his pockets but lifts of the defunct. What good will come of that? would not give twopence a dozen for 'em! A poor ſet of grandees, with nothing but a tie-wig for their portions!"

Cecilia, unable to bear this harangue in the preſence of young Delvile, who, however, laughed it off with a very good grace, aroſe with an intention to retreat, which being perceived by Sir Robert Floyer, who had attended to this dialogue with haughty contempt, he came forward, and ſaid, " now then, madam, may I have the honour of your hand?"

" No, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, " I am engaged."

" Engaged again?" cried he, with the air of a man who thought himſelf much injured.

" Glad of it, glad of it!" ſaid Mr Briggs; " ſerved very right! have nothing to ſay to him, my chick!"

" Why

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"Why not, Sir?" cried Sir Robert, with an imperious look.

"Sha'n't have her, shan't have her! can tell you that; won't consent; know you of old."

"And what do you know of me, pray Sir?"

"No good, no good; nothing to say to you; found fault with my nose! ha'n't forgot it."

At this moment Mr Marriot came to claim his partner, who, very willing to quit this scene of wrangling and vulgarity, immediately attended him.

Miss Larolles, again flying up to her, said "O my dear, we are all expiring to know who that creature is! I never saw such a horrid fright in my life!"

Cecilia was beginning to satisfy her, but some more young ladies coming up to join in the request, she endeavoured to pass on: "O but," cried Miss Larolles, detaining her, "do pray stop, for I've something to tell you that's so monstrous you've no idea. Do you know Mr Meadows has not danced at all! and he's been standing with Mr Sawyer, and looking on all the time, and whispering and laughing so you've no notion. However, I assure you, I'm excessive glad he did not ask me, for all I have been sitting still all this time, for I had a great deal rather sit still, I assure you: only I'm sorry I put on this dress,

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dreſs, for any thing would have done juſt to look on in that ſtupid manner."

Here Mr Meadows ſauntered towards them; and all the young ladies began playing with their fans, and turning their heads another way, to diſguiſe the expectations which his approach awakened; and Miſs Larolles, in a haſty whiſper to Cecilia, cried, "Pray don't take any notice of what I ſaid, for if he ſhould happen to aſk me, I can't well refuſe him, you know, for if I do, he'll be ſo exceſſive affronted you can't think."

Mr Meadows then, mixing in the little group, began, with ſundry grimaces, to exclaim "how intollerably hot it is! there's no ſuch thing as breathing. How can any body think of dancing! I am amazed Mr Harrel has not a ventilator in this room. Don't you think it would be a great improvement?"

This ſpeech, though particularly addreſſed to no one, received immediately an aſſenting anſwer from all the young ladies.

Then, turning to Miſs Larolles, "Don't you dance?" he ſaid.

"Me?" cried ſhe, embarraſſed, "yes, I believe ſo,—really I don't know,—I a'n't quite determined."

"O, do dance!" cried he, ſtretching himſelf and yawning, "it always gives me ſpirits to ſee you."

Then, turning ſuddenly to Cecilia, without any

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any previous ceremony of renewing his acquaintance, either by ſpeaking or bowing, he abruptly ſaid "Do you love dancing, ma'am?"

"Yes, Sir, extremely well."

"I am very glad to hear it. You have one thing, then, to ſoften exiſtence."

"Do you diſlike it yourſelf?"

"What dancing? Oh dreadful! how it was ever adopted in a civilized country, I cannot find out; 'tis certainly a Barbarian exerciſe, and of ſavage origin. Don't you think ſo, Miſs Larolles?"

"Lord no," cried Miſs Larolles, "I aſſure you I like it better than any thing; I know nothing ſo delightful; I declare I dare ſay I could not live without it; I ſhould be ſo ſtupid you can't conceive."

"Why I remember," ſaid Mr Marriott, "when Mr Meadows was always dancing himſelf. Have you forgot, Sir, when you uſed to wiſh the night would laſt for ever, that you might dance without ceaſing?"

Mr Meadows, who was now intently ſurveying a painting that was over the chimney-piece, ſeemed not to hear this queſtion, but preſently called out, "I am amazed Mr Harrel can ſuffer ſuch a picture as this to be in his houſe. I hate a portrait, 'tis ſo wearisome looking at a thing that is doing nothing!"

"Do

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"Do you like hiſtorical pictures, Sir, any better?"

"O no, I deteſt them! views of battles, murders, and death! Shocking! ſhocking! —I ſhrink from them with horror!"

"Perhaps you are fond of landſcapes?"

"By no means! Green trees and fat cows! what do they tell one? I hate every thing that is inſipid."

"Your toleration, then," ſaid Cecilia, "will not be very extenſive."

"No," ſaid he, yawning, "one can tolerate nothing! one's patience is wholly exhauſted by the total tediouſneſs of every thing one ſees, and every body one talks with. Don't you find it ſo, ma'am?"

"*Sometimes!*" ſaid Cecilia, rather archly.

"You are right, ma'am, extremely right; one does not know what in the world to do with one's ſelf. At home, one is killed with meditation; abroad, one is overpowered by ceremony; no poſſibility of finding eaſe or comfort. You never go into public, I think, ma'am?"

"Why not to be much *marked*, I find!" ſaid Cecilia, laughing.

"O, I beg your pardon! I believe I ſaw you one evening at Almack's: I really beg your pardon, but I had quite forgot it."

"Lord, Mr Meadows," ſaid Miſs Larolles, "don't you know you are meaning

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the Pantheon? only conceive how you forget things!"

"The Pantheon, was it? I never know one of thoſe places from another. I heartily wiſh they were all aboliſhed; I hate public places. 'Tis terrible to be under the ſame roof with a ſet of people who would care nothing if they ſaw one expiring!"

"You are, at leaſt, then, fond of the ſociety of your friends?"

"O no! to be worn out by ſeeing always the ſame faces!—one is ſick to death of friends; nothing makes one ſo melancholy."

Cecilia now went to join the dancers, and Mr Meadows, turning to Miſs Larolles, ſaid, "Pray don't let me keep you from dancing; I am afraid you'll loſe your place."

"No," cried ſhe, bridling, "I ſha'nt dance at all."

"How cruel," cried he, yawning, "when you know how it exhilirates me to ſee you! Don't you think this room is very cloſe? I muſt go and try another atmoſphere——But I hope you will relent, and dance?"

And then, ſtretching his arms as if half aſleep, he ſauntered into the next room, where he flung himſelf upon a ſofa till the ball was over.

The new partner of Cecilia, who was a wealthy, but very ſimple young man, uſed his

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his utmoſt efforts to entertain and oblige her, and, flattered by the warmth of his own deſire, he fancied that he ſucceeded; though, in a ſtate of ſuch ſuſpence and anxiety, a man of brighter talents had failed.

At the end of the two dances, Lord Ernolf again attempted to engage her for his ſon, but ſhe now excuſed herſelf from dancing any more, and ſat quietly as a ſpectatreſs till the reſt of the company gave over. Mr Marriot, however, would not quit her, and ſhe was compelled to ſupport with him a trifling converſation, which, though irkſome to herſelf, to him, who had not *ſeen her in her happier hour*, was delightful.

She expected every inſtant to be again joined by young Delvile, but the expectation was diſappointed; he came not; ſhe concluded he was in another apartment; the company was ſummoned to ſupper, ſhe then thought it impoſſible to miſs him; but, after waiting, and looking for him in vain, ſhe found he had already left the houſe.

The reſt of the evening ſhe ſcarce knew what paſſed, for ſhe attended to nothing; Mr Monckton might watch, and Mr Briggs might exhort Sir, Sir Robert might diſplay his inſolence, or Mr Marriot his gallantry, —all was equally indifferent, and equally unheeded, and before half the company left the houſe, ſhe retired to her own room.

She ſpent the night in the utmoſt diſtur-

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bance; the occurrences of the evening with reſpect to young Delvile ſhe looked upon as deciſive: if his abſence had chagrined her, his preſence had ſtill more ſhocked her, ſince, while ſhe was left to conjecture, though ſhe had fears ſhe had hopes, and though all ſhe ſaw was gloomy, all ſhe expected was pleaſant; but they had now met, and thoſe expectations proved fallacious. She knew not, indeed, how to account for the ſtrangeneſs of his conduct; but in ſeeing it was ſtrange, ſhe was convinced it was unfavourable: he had evidently avoided her while it was in his power, and when, at laſt, he was obliged to meet her, he was formal, diſtant, and reſerved.

The more ſhe recollected and dwelt upon the difference of his behaviour in their preceding meeting, the more angry as well as amazed ſhe became at the change, and though ſhe ſtill concluded the purſuit of ſome other object occaſioned it, ſhe could find no excuſe for his fickleneſs if that purſuit was recent, nor for his caprice if it was anterior.

CHAP.

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CHAP. VIII.

A Broad Hint.

THE next day Cecilia, to drive Delvile a little from her thoughts, which she now no longer wished him to occupy, again made a visit to Miss Belfield, whose society afforded her more consolation than any other she could procure.

She found her employed in packing up, and preparing to remove to another lodging, for her brother, she said, was so much better, that he did not think it right to continue in so disgraceful a situation.

She talked with her accustomed openness of her affairs, and the interest which Cecilia involuntarily took in them, contributed to lessen her vexation in thinking of her own. "The generous friend of my brother," said she, "who, though but a new acquaintance to him, has courted him in all his sorrows, when every body else forsook him, has brought him at last into a better way of thinking. He says there is a gentleman whose son is soon going abroad, who he is almost sure will like my brother vastly, and in another week, he is to be introduced to him. And so, if my mother can but recon-

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cile herſelf to parting with him, perhaps we may all do well again."

"Your mother," ſaid Cecilia, "when he is gone, will better know the value of the bleſſing ſhe has left in her daughter."

"O no, madam, no; ſhe is wrapt up in him, and cares nothing for all the world beſides. It was always ſo, and we have all of us been uſed to it. But we have had a ſad ſcene ſince you were ſo kind as to come laſt; for when ſhe told him what you had done, he was almoſt out of his ſenſes with anger that we had acquainted you with his diſtreſs, and he ſaid it was publiſhing his miſery, and undoing whatever his friend or himſelf could do, for it was making him aſhamed to appear in the world, even when his affairs might be better. But I told him again and again that you had as much ſweetneſs as goodneſs, and inſtead of hurting his reputation, would do him nothing but credit."

"I am ſorry," ſaid Cecilia, "Mrs Belfield mentioned the circumſtance at all; it would have been better, for many reaſons, that he ſhould not have heard of it."

"She hoped it would pleaſe him," anſwered Miſs Belfield;" however, he made us both promiſe we would take no ſuch ſtep in future, for he ſaid *we* were not reduced to ſo much indigence, whatever he was: and that as to our accepting money from other people, that we might ſave up our own, for him,

him, it would be anſwering no purpoſe, for he ſhould think himſelf a monſter to make uſe of it."

"And what ſaid your mother?"

"Why ſhe gave him a great many promiſes that ſhe would never vex him about it again; and indeed, much as I know we are obliged to you, madam, and gratefully as I am ſure I would lay down my life to ſerve you, I am very glad in this caſe that my brother has found it out. For though I ſo much wiſh him to do ſomething for himſelf, and not to be ſo proud, and live in a manner he has no right to do, I think, for all that, that it is a great diſgrace to my poor father's honeſt memory, to have us turn beggars after his death, when he left us all ſo well provided for, if he had but known how to be ſatisfied."

"There is a natural rectitude in your heart," ſaid Cecilia, "that the ableſt caſuiſts could not mend."

She then enquired whither they were removing, and Miſs Belfield told her to Portland-ſtreet, Oxford-Road, where they were to have two apartments up two pair of ſtairs, and the uſe of a very good parlour, in which her brother might ſee his friends. "And this," added ſhe, "is a luxury for which nobody can blame him, becauſe if he has not the appearance of a decent home, no gentleman will employ him."

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The Paddington houſe, ſhe ſaid, was already let, and her mother was determined not to hire another, but ſtill to live as penuriouſly as poſſible, in order, notwithſtanding his remonſtrances, to ſave all ſhe could of her income for her ſon.

Here the converſation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs Belfield, who very familiarly ſaid ſhe came to tell Cecilia they were *all in the wrong box* in letting her ſon know of the 10 *l.* bank note, "for," continued ſhe, "he has a pride that would grace a duke, and he thinks nothing of his hardſhips, ſo long as nobody knows of them. So another time we muſt manage things better, and when we do him any good, not let him know a word of the matter. We'll ſettle it all among ourſelves, and one day or other he'll be glad enough to thank us."

Cecilia, who ſaw Miſs Belfield colour with ſhame at the freedom of this hint, now aroſe to depart: but Mrs Belfield begged her not to go ſo ſoon, and preſſed her with ſuch urgency to again ſit down, that ſhe was obliged to comply.

She then began a warm commendation of her ſon, laviſhly praiſing all his good qualities, and exalting even his defects, concluding with ſaying, "But, ma'am, for all he's ſuch a complete gentleman, and for all he's made ſo much of, he was ſo diffident, I could not get him to call and thank you for the

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the preſent you made him, though, when he went his laſt airing, I almoſt knelt to him to do it. But, with all his merit, he wants as much encouragement as a lady, for I can tell you it is not a little will do for him."

Cecilia, amazed at this extraordinary ſpeech, looked from the mother to the daughter in order to diſcover its meaning, which, however, was ſoon rendered plainer by what followed.

"But pray now, ma'am, don't think him the more ungrateful for his ſhyneſs, for young ladies ſo high in the world as you are, muſt go pretty good lengths before a young man will get courage to ſpeak to them. And though I have told my ſon over and over that the ladies never like a man the worſe for being a little bold, he's ſo much down in the mouth that it has no effect upon him. But it all comes of his being brought up at the univerſity, for that makes him think he knows better than I can tell him. And ſo, to be ſure, he does. However, for all that, it is a hard thing upon a mother to find all ſhe ſays goes juſt for nothing. But I hope you'll excuſe him, ma'am, for it's nothing in the world but his over modeſty."

Cecilia now ſtared with a look of ſo much aſtoniſhment and diſpleaſure, that Mrs Belfield, ſuſpecting ſhe had gone rather too far, added, "I beg you won't take what I've ſaid amiſs, ma'am, for we mothers of families are

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more uſed to ſpeak out than maiden ladies. And I ſhould not have ſaid ſo much, but only I was afraid you would miſconſtrue my ſon's backwardneſs; and ſo that he might be flung out of your favour at laſt, and all for nothing but having too much reſpect for you."

"O dear mother!" cried Miſs Belfield, whoſe face was the colour of ſcarlet, "pray!"——

"What's the matter now?" cried Mrs. Belfield; "you are as ſhy as your brother; and if we are all to be ſo, when are we to come to an underſtanding?"

"Not immediately, I believe, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, riſing; "but that we may not plunge deeper in our miſtakes, I will for the preſent take my leave."

"No, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, ſtopping her, "pray don't go yet, for I've got a great many things I want to talk to you about. In the firſt place, ma'am, pray what is your opinion of this ſcheme for ſending my ſon abroad into foreign parts? I don't know what you may think of it, but as to me, it half drives me out of my ſenſes to have him taken away from me at laſt in that unnatural manner. And I'm ſure, ma'am, if you would only put in a word againſt it, I dare ſay he would give it up without a demur."

"Me?" cried Cecilia, diſengaging herſelf from her hold, "No, madam, you muſt apply

apply to thoſe friends who better underſtand his affairs, and who would have a deeper intereſt in detaining him."

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs Belfield, with ſcarcely ſmothered vexation, "how hard it is to make theſe grand young ladies come to reaſon! As to my ſon's other friends, what good will it do for him to mind what they ſay? who can expect him to give up his journey, without knowing what amends he ſhall get for it!"

"You muſt ſettle this matter with him at your leiſure," ſaid Cecilia, "I cannot now ſtay another moment."

Mrs Belfield, again finding ſhe had been too precipitate, tried to draw back, ſaying, "Pray, ma'am, don't let what I have mentioned go againſt my ſon in your good opinion, for he knows no more of it than the furtheſt perſon in the world, as my daughter can teſtify: for as to ſhyneſs, he's juſt as ſhy as a lady himſelf; ſo what good he ever got at the Univerſity, as to the matter of making his fortune, it's what I never could diſcover. However, I dare ſay he knows beſt; though when all comes to all, if I was to ſpeak my mind, I think he's made but a poor hand of it."

Cecilia, who only through compaſſion to the bluſhing Henrietta forbore repreſſing this forwardneſs more ſeriouſly, merely anſwered Mrs Belfield by wiſhing her good

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morning: but, while she was taking a kinder leave of her timid daughter, the mother added, "As to the present, ma'am, you was so kind to make us, Henny can witness for me every penny of it shall go to my son."

"I rather meant it," said Cecilia, "for your daughter; but if it is of use to any body, my purpose is sufficiently answered."

Mrs Belfield again pressed her to sit down, but she would not again listen to her, coldly saying, "I am sorry you troubled Mr Belfield, with any mention of what passed between his sister and me, but should you speak of it again, I beg you will explain to him that he had no concern in that little transaction which belonged wholly to ourselves."

She then hastened down stairs, followed, however, by Mrs Belfield, making awkward excuses for what she had said, intermixed with frequent hints that she knew all the time she was in the right.

This little incident, which convinced Cecilia Mrs Belfield was firmly persuaded she was in love with her son, gave her much uneasiness; she feared the son himself might entertain the same notion, and thought it most probable the daughter also had imbibed it, though but for the forward vulgarity of the sanguine mother, their opinions might long have remained concealed. Her benevolence towards them, notwithstanding its purity, must now therefore cease to be exerted:

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erted: nor could she even visit Miss Belfield, since prudence, and a regard for her own character, seemed immediately to prohibit all commerce with the family.

"And thus difficult," cried she, "is the blameless use of riches, though all who want them, think nothing so easy as their disposal! This family I have so much wished to serve, I may at last only have injured, since the disappointment of their higher expectations, may render all smaller benefits contemptible. And thus this unfortunate misconstruction of my good offices, robs them of a useful assistant, and deprives me at the same time of an amiable companion."

As soon as she returned home, she had a letter put into her hand which came from Mr Marriot, whose servant had twice called for an answer in the short time she had been absent.

This letter contained a most passionate avowal of the impression she had made on his heart the preceding evening, and an angry complaint that Mr Harrel had refused to hear his proposals. He entreated her permission to wait upon her for only five minutes, and concluded with the most fervent professions of respect and admiration.

The precipitancy of this declaration served merely to confirm the opinion she had already conceived of the weakness of his understanding: but the obstinacy of Mr Harrel irritated and

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and diſtreſſed her; though weary of expoſtulating with ſo hopeleſs a ſubject, whom neither reaſon nor gratitude could turn from his own purpoſes, ſhe was obliged to ſubmit to his management, and was well content, in the preſent inſtance, to affirm his decree. She therefore wrote a conciſe anſwer to her new admirer, in the uſual form of civil rejection.

CHAP. IX.

An Accommodation.

CECILIA was informed the next morning that a young woman begged to ſpeak with her, and upon ſending for her up ſtairs, ſhe ſaw, to her great ſurpriſe, Miſs Belfield.

She came in fear and trembling, ſent, ſhe ſaid, by her mother, to entreat her pardon for what had paſſed the preceding day; "But I know, madam," ſhe added, "you cannot pardon it, and therefore all that I mean to do is to clear my brother from any ſhare in what was ſaid, for indeed he has too much ſenſe to harbour any ſuch preſumption; and to thank you with a moſt grateful heart for all the goodneſs you have ſhewn us."

And

And then, modeſtly courtſying, ſhe would have returned home; but Cecilia, much touched by her gentleneſs, took her hand, and kindly reviving her by aſſurances of eſteem, entreated that ſhe would lengthen her ſtay.

"How good is this, madam," ſaid ſhe, "after having ſo much reaſon to think ſo ill of me and of all of us! I tried all in my power to undeceive my mother, or at leaſt to keep her quiet; but ſhe was ſo much perſuaded ſhe was right, that ſhe never would liſten to me, and always ſaid, did I ſuppoſe it was for *me* you condeſcended to come ſo often?"

"Yes," anſwered Cecilia, "moſt undoubtedly; had I not known you, however well I might have wiſhed your brother, I ſhould certainly not have viſited at his houſe. But I am very happy to hear the miſtake had ſpread no further."

"No indeed, madam, I never once thought of it; and as to my brother, when my mother only hinted it to him, he was quite angry. But though I don't mean to vindicate what has happened, you will not, I hope, be diſpleaſed if I ſay my mother is much more pardonable than ſhe ſeems to be, for the ſame miſtake ſhe made with you, ſhe would have been as apt to have made with a princeſs; it was not, therefore, from any want of reſpect, but merely from thinking my

my brother might marry as high as he pleaſed, and believing no lady would refuſe him, if he would but have the courage to ſpeak."

Cecilia aſſured her ſhe would think no more of the error, but told her that to avoid its renewal, ſhe muſt decline calling upon her again till her brother was gone. She begged therefore to ſee her in Portman-ſquare whenever ſhe had leiſure, repeatedly aſſuring her of her good opinion and regard, and of the pleaſure with which ſhe ſhould ſeize every opportunity of ſhewing them.

Delighted by a reception ſo kind, Miſs Belfield remained with her all the morning; and when at laſt ſhe was obliged to leave her, ſhe was but too happy in being ſolicited to repeat her viſit.

She ſuffered one day only to elapſe before ſhe ſhewed her readineſs to accept the friendſhip that was offered her; and Cecilia, much pleaſed by this eagerneſs, redoubled her efforts to oblige and to ſerve her.

From this time, hardly a day paſſed in which ſhe did not call in Portman-ſquare, where nothing in her reception was omitted that could contribute to her contentment. Cecilia was glad to employ her mind in any way that related not to Delvile, whom ſhe now earneſtly endeavoured to think of no more, denying herſelf even the pleaſure of talking of him with Miſs Belfield, by the name of *her brother's noble friend.*

During

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During this time ſhe deviſed various methods, all too delicate to give even the ſhadow of offence, for making both uſeful and ornamental preſents to her new favourite, with whom ſhe grew daily more ſatisfied, and to whom ſhe propoſed hereafter offering a reſidence in her own houſe.

The trial of intimacy, ſo difficult to the ableſt to ſtand, and from which even the moſt faultleſs are ſo rarely acquitted, Miſs Belfield ſuſtained with honour. Cecilia found her artleſs, ingenuous, and affectionate; her underſtanding was good, though no pains had been taken to improve it; her diſpoſition though ardent was ſoft, and her mind ſeemed informed by intuitive integrity.

She communicated to Cecilia all the affairs of her family, diſguiſing from her neither diſtreſs nor meanneſs, and ſeeking to palliate nothing but the groſſer parts of the character of her mother. She ſeemed equally ready to make known to her even the moſt choſen ſecrets of her own boſom, for that ſuch ſhe had was evident, from a frequent appearance of abſence and uneaſineſs which ſhe took but little trouble to conceal. Cecilia, however, truſted not herſelf, in the preſent critical ſituation of her own mind, with any enquiries that might lead to a ſubject ſhe was conſcious ſhe ought not to dwell upon: a ſhort time ſhe hoped, would totally remove her ſuſpence; but as ſhe had much leſs reaſon to expect

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expect good than evil, she made it her immediate study to prepare for the worst, and therefore carefully avoided all discourse that, by nourishing her tenderness, might weaken her resolution.

While thus, in friendly conversation and virtuous forbearance, passed gravely, but not unhappily, the time of Cecilia, the rest of the house was very differently employed: feasting, revelling, amusements of all sorts were pursued with more eagerness than ever, and the alarm which so lately threatened their destruction, seemed now merely to heighten the avidity with which they were sought. Yet never was the disunion of happiness and diversion more striking and obvious: Mr Harrel, in spite of his natural levity, was seized from time to time with fits of horror that embittered his gayest moments, and cast a cloud upon all his enjoyments. Always an enemy to solitude, he now found it wholly insupportable, and ran into company of any sort, less from a hope of finding entertainment, than from a dread of spending half an hour by himself.

Cecilia, who saw that his rapacity for pleasure encreased with his uneasiness, once more ventured to speak with his lady upon the subject of reformation; counselling her to take advantage of his present apparent discontent, which shewed at least some sensibility of his situation, in order to point out to

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to him the neceſſity of an immediate inſpection into his affairs, which, with a total change in his way of life, was her only chance for ſnatching him from the diſmal deſpondency into which he was ſinking.

Mrs Harrel declared herſelf unequal to following this advice, and ſaid that her whole ſtudy was to find Mr Harrel amuſement, for he was grown ſo ill-humoured and petulant ſhe quite feared being alone with him.

The houſe therefore now was more crowded than ever, and nothing but diſſipation was thought of. Among thoſe who upon this plan were courted to it, the foremoſt was Mr Morrice, who, from a peculiar talent of uniting ſervility of conduct with gaiety of ſpeech, made himſelf at once ſo agreeable and uſeful in the family, that in a ſhort time they fancied it impoſſible to live without him. And Morrice, though his firſt view in obtaining admittance had been the cultivation of his acquaintance with Cecilia, was perfectly ſatisfied with the turn that matters had taken, ſince his utmoſt vanity had never led him to entertain any matrimonial hopes with her, and he thought his fortune as likely to profit from the civility of her friends as of herſelf. For Morrice, however flighty and wild, had always at heart the ſtudy of his own intereſt; and though from a giddy forwardneſs of diſpoſition he often gave offence, his

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his meaning and his ſerious attention was not the leſs directed to the advancement of his own affairs: he formed no connection from which he hoped not ſome benefit, and he conſidered the acquaintance and friendſhip of his ſuperiors in no other light than that of procuring him ſooner or later recommendation to new clients.

Sir Robert Floyer alſo was more frequent than ever in his viſits, and Mr Harrel, notwithſtanding the remonſtrances of Cecilia, contrived every poſſible opportunity of giving him acceſs to her. Mrs Harrel herſelf, tho' hitherto neutral, now pleaded his cauſe with earneſtneſs; and Mr Arnott, who had been her former refuge from this perſecution, grew ſo ſerious and ſo tender in his devoirs, that, unable any longer to doubt the ſentiments ſhe had inſpired, ſhe was compelled even with him to be guarded and diſtant.

She now with daily concern looked back to the ſacrifice ſhe had made to the worthleſs and ungrateful Mr Harrel, and was ſometimes tempted to immediately chuſe another guardian, and leave his houſe for ever: yet the delicacy of her diſpoſition was averſe to any ſtep that might publicly expoſe him, and her early regard for his wife, would not ſuffer her to put it in execution.

Theſe circumſtances contributed ſtrongly to encreaſe her intimacy with Miſs Belfield; ſhe now never ſaw Mrs Delvile, whom alone ſhe

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ſhe preferred to her, and from the troubleſome aſſiduity of Sir Robert, ſcarce ever met Mr Monckton but in his preſence: ſhe found, therefore, no reſource againſt teazing and vexation, but what was afforded her by the converſation of the amiable Henrietta.

CHAP. X.

A Detection.

A Fortnight had now elapſed in which Cecilia had had no ſort of communication with the Delviles, whom equally from pride and from prudence ſhe forbore to ſeek herſelf, when one morning, while Miſs Belfield was ſitting with her, ſhe was told by her maid that young Mr Delvile was in the drawing-room, and begged the honour of ſeeing her for a few moments.

Cecilia, though ſhe ſtarted and changed colour with ſurprize at this meſſage, was unconſcious ſhe did either, from the yet greater ſurprize ſhe received by the behaviour of Miſs Belfield, who haſtily ariſing, exclaimed "Good God, Mr Delvile! —— do you know

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know Mr Delvile, madam?—does Mr Delvile visit at this house?"

"Sometimes; not often," answered Cecilia; "but why?"

"I don't know,—nothing, madam,—I only asked by accident, I believe,—but it's very—it's extremely—I did not know——" and colouring violently, she again sat down.

An apprehension the most painful now took possession of Cecilia, and absorbed in thought, she continued for some minutes silent and immoveable.

From this state she was awakened by her maid, who asked if she chose to have her gloves.

Cecilia, taking them from her without speaking, left the room, and not daring to stop for enquiry or consideration, hastened down stairs; but when she entered the apartment where young Delvile was waiting for her, all utterance seemed denied her, and she courtesied without saying a word.

Struck with the look and uncommon manner of her entrance, he became in a moment as much disturbed as herself, pouring forth a thousand unnecessary and embarrassed apologies for his visit, and so totally forgetting even the reason why he made it, that he had taken his leave, and was departing before he recollected it. He then turned back, forcing a laugh at his own absence of mind, and told her

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her he had only called to acquaint her, that the commands with which she had honoured him were now obeyed, and, he hoped, to her satisfaction.

Cecilia, who knew not she had ever given him any, waited his further explanation; and he then informed her he had that very morning introduced Mr Belfield to the Earl of Vannelt, who had already heard him very advantageously spoken of by some gentlemen to whom he had been known at the University, and who was so much pleased with him upon this first interview, that he meant, after a few enquiries, which could not but turn out to his credit, to commit his eldest son to his trust in making the tour of Europe.

Cecilia thanked him for her share in the trouble he had taken in this transaction; and then asked if Mrs Delvile continued well.

"Yes," answered he with a smile half reproachful, "as well as one who having ever hoped your favour, can easily be after finding that hope disappointed. But much as she has taught her son, there is one lesson she might perhaps learn from him;—to fly, not seek, those dangerous indulgencies of which the deprivation is the loss of peace!"

He then bowed, and made his exit.

This unexpected reproof, and the yet more unexpected compliment that accompanied it, in both which *more seemed meant than met the ear*,

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ear, encreaſed the perturbation into which Cecilia had already been thrown. It occurred to her that under the ſanction of his mother's name, he had taken an opportunity of making an apology for his own conduct; yet why avoiding her ſociety, if to that he alluded, ſhould be *flying a dangerous indulgence*, ſhe could not underſtand, ſince he had ſo little reaſon to fear any repulſe in continuing to ſeek it.

Sorry, however, for the abrupt manner in which ſhe had left Miſs Belfield, ſhe loſt not a moment in haſtening back to her; but when ſhe came into the room, ſhe found her employed in looking out of the window, her eye following ſome object with ſuch earneſtneſs of attention, that ſhe perceived not her return.

Cecilia, who could not doubt the motive of her curioſity, had no great difficulty in forbearing to offer her any interruption. She drew her head back in a few minutes, and caſting it upwards, with her hands claſped, ſoftly whiſpered, "Heaven ever ſhield and bleſs him! and O may he never feel ſuch pain as I do!"

She then again looked out, but ſoon drawing herſelf in, ſaid, in the ſame ſoft accents, "Oh why art thou gone! ſweeteſt and nobleſt of men! why might I not ſee thee longer, when under heaven, there is no other bleſſing I wiſh for!"

A ſigh

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A ſigh which at theſe words eſcaped Cecilia made her ſtart and turn towards the door; the deepeſt bluſhes overſpread the cheeks of both as their eyes met each other, and while Miſs Belfield trembled in every limb at the diſcovery ſhe had made, Cecilia herſelf was hardly able to ſtand.

A painful and moſt embarraſſed ſilence ſucceeded, which was only broken by Miſs Belfield's burſting into tears.

Cecilia, extremely moved, forgot for a moment her own intereſt in what was paſſing, and tenderly approaching, embraced her with the utmoſt kindneſs: but ſtill ſhe ſpoke not, fearing to make any enquiry, from dreading to hear any explanation.

Miſs Belfield, ſoothed by her ſoftneſs, clung about her, and hiding her face in her arms, ſobbed out "Ah madam! who ought to be unhappy if befriended by you! if I could help it, I would love nobody elſe in almoſt the whole world. But you muſt let me leave you now, and to-morrow I will tell you every thing."

Cecilia, who had no wiſh for making any oppoſition, embraced her again, and ſuffered her quietly to depart.

Her own mind was now in a ſtate of the utmoſt confuſion. The rectitude of her heart and the ſoundneſs of her judgment had hitherto guarded her both from error and blame, and, except during her recent ſuſ-

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pence, had preserved her tranquillity inviolate: but her commerce with the world had been small and confined, and her actions had had little reference but to herself. The case was now altered; and she was suddenly in a conjuncture of all others the most delicate, that of accidentally discovering a rival in a favourite friend.

The fondness she had conceived for Miss Belfield, and the sincerity of her intentions as well as promises to serve her, made the detection of this secret peculiarly cruel: she had lately felt no pleasure but in her society, and looked forward to much future comfort from the continuance of her regard, and from their constantly living together: but now this was no longer even to be desired, since the utter annihilation of the wishes of both, by young Delvile's being disposed of to a third person, could alone render eligible their dwelling under the same roof.

Her pity, however, for Miss Belfield was almost wholly unallayed by jealousy; she harboured not any suspicion that she was loved by young Delvile, whose aspiring spirit led her infinitely more to fear some higher rival, than to believe he bestowed even a thought upon the poor Henrietta: but still she wished with the utmost ardour to know the length of their acquaintance, how often they had met, when they had conversed, what notice

notice he had taken of her, and how ſo dangerous a preference had invaded her heart.

But though this curioſity was both natural and powerful, her principal concern was the arrangement of her own conduct: the next day Miſs Belfield was to tell her every thing by a voluntary promiſe; but ſhe doubted if ſhe had any right to accept ſuch a confidence. Miſs Belfield ſhe was ſure, knew not ſhe was intereſted in the tale, ſince ſhe had not even imagined that Delvile was known to her. She might hope, therefore, not only for advice but aſſiſtance, and fancy that while ſhe repoſed her ſecret in the boſom of a friend, ſhe ſecured herſelf her beſt offices and beſt wiſhes for ever.

Would ſhe obtain them? no; the moſt romantic generoſity would revolt from ſuch a demand, for however precarious was her own chance with young Delvile, Miſs Belfield ſhe was ſure could not have any: neither her birth nor education fitted her for his rank in life, and even were both unexceptionable, the ſmallneſs of her fortune, as Mr Monckton had inſtructed her, would be an obſtacle inſurmountable.

Would it not be a kind of treachery to gather from her every thing, yet aid her in nothing? to take advantage of her unſuſpicious openneſs in order to learn all that related to one whom ſhe yet hoped would belong ultimately to herſelf, and gratify an in-

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tereſted curioſity at the expence of a candour not more ſimple than amiable? "No," cried Cecilia, "arts that I could never forgive, I never will practice; this ſweet but unhappy girl ſhall tell me nothing: betrayed already by the tenderneſs of her own heart, ſhe ſhall at leaſt ſuffer no further from any duplicity in mine. If, indeed, Mr Delvile, as I ſuſpect, is engaged elſewhere, I will make this gentle Henrietta the object of my future ſolicitude; the ſympathy of our ſituations will not then divide but unite us, and I will take her to my boſom, hear all her ſorrows, and calm her troubled ſpirit by participating in her ſenſibility. But if, on the contrary, this myſtery ends more happily for myſelf, if Mr Delvile has now now other engagement, and hereafter clears his conduct to my ſatisfaction, I will not be acceſſary to loading her future recollection with the ſhame of a confidence ſhe then cannot but repent, nor with an injury to her delicacy that may wound it for ever."

She determined, therefore, carefully to avoid the ſubject for the preſent, ſince ſhe could offer no advice for which ſhe might not, hereafter, be ſuſpected of ſelfiſh motives; but yet, from a real regard to the tender-hearted girl, to give all the tacit diſcouragement that was in her power to a paſſion which ſhe firmly believed would be productive of nothing but miſery.

Once,

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Once, from the frankneſs natural to her diſpoſition, ſhe thought not merely of receiving but returning her confidence: her better judgment, however, ſoon led her from ſo hazardous a plan, which could only have expoſed them both to a romantic humiliation, by which, in the end, their mutual expectations might prove ſources of mutual diſtruſt.

When Miſs Belfield, therefore, the next morning, her air unuſually timid, and her whole face covered with bluſhes, made her viſit, Cecilia, not ſeeming to notice her confuſion, told her ſhe was very ſorry ſhe was obliged to go out herſelf, and contrived, under various pretences, to keep her maid in the room. Miſs Belfield, ſuppoſing this to be accidental, rejoiced in her imaginary reprieve, and ſoon recovered her uſual cheerfulneſs: and Cecilia, who really meant to call upon Mrs Delvile, borrowed Mrs Harrel's carriage, and ſet down her artleſs young friend at her new lodgings in Portland-Street, before ſhe proceeded to St James's-Square, talking the whole time upon matters of utter indifference.

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CHAP. XI.

A SARCASM.

THE reproach which Cecilia had received from young Delvile in the name of his mother, determined her upon making this viſit; for though, in her preſent uncertainty, ſhe wiſhed only to ſee that family when ſought by themſelves, ſhe was yet deſirous to avoid all appearance of ſingularity, leſt any ſuſpicions ſhould be raiſed of her ſentiments.

Mrs Delvile received her with a cold civility that chilled and afflicted her: ſhe found her ſeriouſly offended by her long abſence, and now for the firſt time perceived that haughtineſs of character which hitherto ſhe had thought only given to her by the calumny of envy; for though her diſpleaſure was undiſguiſed, ſhe deigned not to make any reproaches, evidently ſhewing that her diſappointment in the loſs of her ſociety, was embittered by a proud regret for the kindneſs ſhe believed ſhe had thrown away. But though ſhe ſcrupulouſly forebore the ſmalleſt complaint, ſhe failed not from time to time to

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to caſt out reflections upon fickleneſs and caprice the moſt ſatirical and pointed.

Cecilia, who could not poſſibly avow the motives of her behaviour, ventured not to offer any apology for her apparent negligence; but, hitherto accuſtomed to the moſt diſtinguiſhed kindneſs, a change to ſo much bitterneſs, ſhocked and overpowered her, and ſhe ſat almoſt wholly ſilent, and hardly able to look up.

Lady Honoria Pemberton, a daughter of the Duke of Derwent, now came into the room, and afforded her ſome relief by the ſprightlineſs of her converſation. This young lady, who was a relation of the Delviles, and of a character the moſt airy and unthinking, ran on during her whole viſit in a vein of faſhionable ſcandal, with a levity that the cenſures of Mrs Delvile, though by no means ſpared, had no power to control: and, after having completely ranſacked the topics of the day, ſhe turned ſuddenly to Cecilia, with whom during her reſidence in St James's-Square ſhe had made ſome acquaintance, and ſaid, "So I hear, Miſs Beverley, that after half the town has given you to Sir Robert Floyer, and the other half to my Lord Derford, you intend, without regarding one ſide or the other, to diſappoint them both, and give yourſelf to Mr Marriot."

"Me? no, indeed," anſwered Cecilia,

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" your ladyſhip has been much miſinformed."

" I hope ſo," ſaid Mrs Delvile, " for Mr Marriot, by all I ever heard of him, ſeems to have but one recommendation, and that the laſt Miſs Beverley ought to value, a good eſtate."

Cecilia, ſecretly delighted by a ſpeech which ſhe could not reſiſt flattering herſelf had reference to her ſon, now a little revived, and endeavoured to bear ſome part in the converſation.

" Every body one meets," cried Lady Honoria, " diſpoſes of Miſs Beverley to ſome new perſon; yet the common opinion is that Sir Robert Floyer will be the man. But upon my word, for my own part, I cannot conjecture how ſhe will manage among them; for Mr Marriot declares he's determined he won't be refuſed, and Sir Robert vows that he'll never give her up. So we none of us know how it will end: but I am vaſtly glad ſhe keeps them ſo long in ſuſpence."

" If there is any ſuſpence," ſaid Cecilia, " I am at leaſt ſure it muſt be wilful. But why ſhould your ladyſhip rejoice in it?"

" O, becauſe it helps to torment them, and keeps ſomething going forward. Beſides, we are all looking in the news-papers every day, to ſee when they'll fight another duel for you."

" Ano-

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"Another?" cried Cecilia; "indeed they have never yet fought any for me."

"O, I beg your pardon," anſwered her ladyſhip, "Sir Robert, you know, fought one for you in the beginning of the winter, with that Iriſh fortune-hunter who affronted you at the Opera."

"Iriſh fortune-hunter?" repeated Cecilia, "how ſtrangely has that quarrel been miſrepreſented! In the firſt place, I never was affronted at the Opera at all, and in the ſecond, if your Ladyſhip means Mr Belfield, I queſtion if he ever was in Ireland in his life."

"Well," cried Lady Honoria, "he might come from Scotland, for ought I know, but ſomewhere he certainly came from; and they tell me he is wounded terribly, and Sir Robert has had all his things packed up this month, that in caſe he ſhould die, he may go abroad in a moment.

"And pray where, Lady Honoria," cried Mrs Delvile, "do you contrive to pick up all this rattle?"

"O, I don't know; every body tells me ſomething, ſo I put it all together as well as I can. But I could acquaint you with a ſtranger piece of news than any you have heard yet."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I let you know it, you'll tell your ſon."

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"No, indeed," ſaid Mrs Delvile laughing, "I ſhall probably forget it myſelf."

She then made ſome further difficulty, and Cecilia, uncertain if ſhe was meant to be a party in the communication, ſtrolled to a window; where, however, as Lady Honoria did not lower her voice, ſhe heard her ſay "Why you muſt know I am told he keeps a miſtreſs ſomewhere in Oxford-Road. They ſay ſhe's mighty pretty; I ſhould like vaſtly to ſee her."

The conſternation of Cecilia at this intelligence would certainly have betrayed all ſhe ſo much wiſhed to conceal, had not her fortunate removal to the window guarded her from obſervation. She kept her poſt, fearing to look round, but was much pleaſed when Mrs Delvile, with great indignation anſwered "I am ſorry, Lady Honoria, you can find any amuſement in liſtening to ſuch idle ſcandal, which thoſe who tell will never reſpect you for hearing. In times leſs daring in ſlander, the character of Mortimer would have proved to him a ſhield from all injurious aſperſions; yet who ſhall wonder he could not eſcape, and who ſhall contemn the inventors of calumny, if Lady Honoria Pemberton condeſcends to be entertained with it?"

"Dear Mrs Delvile," cried Lady Honoria, giddily, "you take me too ſeriouſly."

"And

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"And dear Lady Honoria," ſaid Mrs Delvile, "I would it were poſſible to make you take yourſelf ſeriouſly; for could you once ſee with clearneſs and preciſion how much you lower your own dignity, while you ſtoop to depreciate that of others, the very ſubjects that now make your diverſion, would then, far more properly, move your reſentment."

"Ay but, dear madam," cried Lady Honoria, "if that were the caſe, I ſhould be quite perfect, and then you and I ſhould never quarrel, and I don't know what we ſhould do for converſation."

And with theſe words, haſtily ſhaking hands with her, ſhe took leave.

"Such converſation," ſaid Mrs Delvile when ſhe was gone, "as reſults from the mixture of fruitleſs admonition with incorrigible levity, would be indeed *more honoured in the breach than the obſervance.* But levity is ſo much the faſhionable characteriſtic of the preſent age, that a gay young girl who, like Lady Honoria Pemberton, rules the friends by whom ſhe ought to be ruled, had little chance of eſcaping it."

"She ſeems ſo open, however, to reproof," ſaid Cecilia, "that I ſhould hope in a ſhort time ſhe may alſo be open to conviction."

"No," anſwered Mrs Delvile, "I have no hope of her at all. I once took much

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pains with her; but I ſoon found that the eaſineſs with which ſhe hears of her faults, is only another effect of the levity with which ſhe commits them. But if the young are never tired of erring in conduct, neither are the older in erring in judgment; the fallability of *mine* I have indeed very lately experienced."

Cecilia, who ſtrongly felt the poignancy of this ſarcaſm, and whoſe conſtant and unaffected value of Mrs Delvile by no means deſerved it, was again ſilenced, and again moſt cruelly depreſſed: nor could ſhe ſecretly forbear repining that at the very moment ſhe found herſelf threatened with a neceſſity of foregoing the ſociety of her new favourite, Miſs Belfield, the woman in the whole world whom ſhe moſt wiſhed to have for her friend, from an unhappy miſtake was ready to relinquiſh her. Grieved to be thus fallen in her eſteem, and ſhocked that ſhe could offer no juſtification, after a ſhort and thoughtful pauſe, ſhe gravely aroſe to take leave.

Mrs Delvile then told her that if ſhe had any buſineſs to tranſact with Mr Delvile, ſhe adviſed her to acquaint him with it ſoon, as the whole family left town in a few days.

This was a new and ſevere blow to Cecilia, who ſorrowfully repeated, "In a few days, madam?"

"Yes,"

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"Yes," anſwered Mrs Delvile; "I hope you intend to be much concerned?"

"Ah madam!" cried Cecilia, who could no longer preſerve her quietneſs, "if you knew but half the reſpect I bear you, but half the ſincerity with which I value and revere you, all proteſtations would be uſeleſs, for all accuſations would be over!"

Mrs Delvile, at once ſurpriſed and ſoftened by the warmth of this declaration, inſtantly took her hand, and ſaid "They ſhall now, and for ever be over, if it pains you to hear them. I concluded that what I ſaid would be a matter of indifference to you, or all my diſpleaſure would immediately have been ſatisfied, when once I had intimated that your abſence had excited it."

"That I have excited it at all," anſwered Cecilia, "gives me indeed the ſevereſt uneaſineſs; but believe me, madam, however unfortunately appearances may be againſt me, I have always had the higheſt ſenſe of the kindneſs with which you have honoured me, and never has there been the ſmalleſt abatement in the veneration, gratitude and affection I have inviolably borne you."

"You ſee, then," ſaid Mrs Delvile with a ſmile, "that where reproof takes any effect, it is not received with that eaſineſs you were juſt now admiring: on the contrary, where a conceſſion is made without pain, it is alſo made without meaning, for it is not in

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in human nature to project any amendment without a secret repugnance. That here, however, you should differ from Lady Honoria Pemberton, who can wonder, when you are superior to all comparison with her in every thing?"

"Will you then," said Cecilia, "accept my apology, and forgive me?"

"I will do more," said Mrs Delvile laughing, "I will forgive you *without* an apology; for the truth is I have heard none! But come," continued she, perceiving Cecilia much abashed by this comment, "I will enquire no more about the matter; I am glad to receive my young friend again, and even half ashamed, deserving as she is, to say *how* glad!"

She then embraced her affectionately, and owned she had been more mortified by her fancied desertion than she had been willing to own even to herself, repeatedly assuring her that for many years she had not made any acquaintance she so much wished to cultivate, nor enjoyed any society from which she had derived so much pleasure.

Cecilia, whose eyes glistened with modest joy, while her heart beat quick with revived expectation, in listening to an effusion of praise so infinitely grateful to her, found little difficulty in returning her friendly professions, and, in a few minutes, was not merely

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merely reconciled, but more firmly united with her than ever.

Mrs Delvile inſiſted upon keeping her to dinner, and Cecilia, but too happy in her earneſtneſs, readily agreed to ſend Mrs Harrel an excuſe.

Neither of the Mr Delviles ſpent the day at home, and nothing, therefore, diſturbed or interrupted thoſe glowing and delightful ſenſations which ſpring from a cordial renewal of friendſhip and kindneſs. The report, indeed, of Lady Honoria Pemberton gave her ſome uneaſineſs, yet the ſlighty character of that lady, and Mrs Delvile's reply to it, ſoon made her drive it from her mind.

She returned home early in the evening, as other company was expected, and ſhe had not changed her dreſs ſince the morning; but ſhe firſt made a promiſe to ſee Mrs Delvile ſome part of every day during the ſhort time that ſhe meant to remain in town.

CHAP.

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CHAP. XII.

A SURMISE.

THE next morning opened with another ſcene; Mrs Harrel ran into Cecilia's room before breakfaſt, and acquainted her that Mr Harrel had not been at home all night.

The conſternation with which ſhe heard this account ſhe inſtantly endeavoured to diſſipate, in order to ſoften the apprehenſion with which it was communicated: Mrs Harrel, however, was extremely uneaſy, and ſent all the town over to make enquiries, but without receiving any intelligence.

Cecilia, unwilling to leave her in a ſtate of ſuch alarm, wrote an excuſe to Mrs Delvile, that ſhe might continue with her till ſome information was procured. A ſubject alſo of ſuch immediate concern, was ſufficient apology for avoiding any particular converſation with Miſs Belfield, who called as uſual, about noon, and whoſe ſuſceptible heart was much affected by the evident diſturbance in which ſhe found Cecilia.

The

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The whole day passed, and no news arrived: but, greatly to her astonishment, Mrs Harrel in the evening prepared for going to an assembly! yet declaring at the same time it was extremely disagreeable to her, only she was afraid, if she stayed away, every body would suppose something was the matter.

"Who then at last, thought Cecilia, are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated? Those who work for hire, have at least their hours of rest; those who labour for subsistence, are at liberty when subsistence is procured; but those who toil to please the vain and the idle, undertake a task which can never be finished, however scrupulously all private peace, and all internal comfort, may be sacrificed in reality to the folly of saving appearances!"

Losing, however, the motive for which she had given up her own engagement, she now sent for her chair, in order to spend an hour or two with Mrs Delvile.

The servants, as they conducted her up stairs, said they would call their lady; and in entering the drawing room she saw, reading and alone, young Delvile.

He seemed much surprised, but received her with the utmost respect, apologizing for the absence of his mother, whom he said had understood she was not to see her till the next day, and had left him to write letters now, that she might then be at liberty.

Cecilia

Cecilia in return made excuſes for her ſeeming inconſiſtency; after which, for ſome time, all converſation dropt.

The ſilence was at length broken by young Delvile's ſaying, "Mr Belfield's merit has not been thrown away upon Lord Vannelt; he has heard an excellent character of him from all his former acquaintance, and is now fitting up an apartment for him in his own houſe till his ſon begins his tour."

Cecilia ſaid ſhe was very happy in hearing ſuch intelligence; and then again they were both ſilent.

"You have ſeen," ſaid young Delvile, after this ſecond pauſe, "Mr Belfield's ſiſter?"

Cecilia, not without changing colour, anſwered, "Yes, Sir."

"She is very amiable," he continued," too amiable, indeed, for her ſituation, ſince her relations, her brother alone excepted, are all utterly unworthy of her."

He ſtopt; but Cecilia made no anſwer, and he preſently added, "Perhaps you do not think her amiable?——you may have ſeen more of her, and know ſomething to her diſadvantage?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, with a forced alacrity, "but only I was thinking that——did you ſay you knew all her relations?"

No," he anſwered, "but when I have been with Mr Belfield, ſome of them have called upon him."

Again

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Again they were both ſilent; and then Cecilia, aſhamed of her apparent backwardneſs to give praiſe, compelled herſelf to ſay, "Miſs Belfield is indeed a very ſweet girl, and I wiſh —" ſhe ſtopt, not well knowing herſelf what ſhe meant to add.

"I have been greatly pleaſed," ſaid he, after waiting ſome time to hear if ſhe would finiſh her ſpeech, "by being informed of your goodneſs to her, and I think ſhe ſeems equally to require and to deſerve it. I doubt not you will extend it to her when ſhe is deprived of her brother, for then will be the time that by doing her moſt ſervice, it will reflect on yourſelf moſt honour."

Cecilia, confounded by this recommendation, faintly anſwered, "Certainly,—— whatever is in my power,—I ſhall be very glad——"

And juſt then Mrs Delvile made her appearance, and during the mutual apologies that followed, her ſon left the room. Cecilia, glad of any pretence to leave it alſo, inſiſted upon giving no interruption to Mrs Delvile's letter writing, and having promiſed to ſpend all the next day with her, hurried back to her chair.

The reflections that followed her thither were by no means the moſt ſoothing: ſhe began now to apprehend that the pity ſhe had beſtowed upon Miſs Belfield, Miſs Belfield in a ſhort time might beſtow upon her: at

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at any other time, his recommendation would merely have ſerved to confirm her opinion of his benevolence, but in her preſent ſtate of anxiety and uncertainty, every thing gave birth to conjecture, and had power to alarm her. He had behaved to her of late with the ſtrangeſt coldneſs and diſtance,——his praiſe of Henrietta had been ready and animated.—Henrietta ſhe knew adored him, and ſhe knew not with what reaſon,—but an involuntary ſuſpicion aroſe in her mind, that the partiality ſhe had herſelf once excited, was now transferred to that little-dreaded, but not leſs dangerous rival.

Yet, if ſuch was the caſe, what was to become either of the pride or the intereſt of his family? Would his relations ever pardon an alliance ſtimulated neither by rank nor riches? would Mr Delvile, who hardly ever ſpoke but to the high-born, without ſeeming to think his dignity ſomewhat injured, deign to receive for a daughter-in-law the child of a citizen and tradeſman? would Mrs Delvile herſelf, little leſs elevated in her notions, though infinitely ſofter in her manners, ever condeſcend to acknowledge her? Cecilia's own birth and connections, ſuperior as they were to thoſe of Miſs Belfield, were even openly diſdained by Mr Delvile, and all her expectations of being received into his family were founded upon the largeneſs of her fortune, in favour of which

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which the brevity of her genealogy might perhaps pass unnoticed. But what was the chance of Miss Belfield, who neither had ancestors to boast, nor wealth to allure?

This thought, however, awakened all the generosity of her soul: "If," cried she, "the advantages I possess are merely those of riches, how little should I be flattered by any appearance of preference! and how ill can I judge with what sincerity it may be offered! happier in that case is the lowly Henrietta, who to poverty may attribute neglect, but who can only be sought and caressed from motives of purest regard. She loves Mr Delvile, loves him with the most artless affection:—perhaps, too, he loves her in return,—why else his solicitude to know my opinion of her, and why so sudden his alarm when he thought it unfavourable? Perhaps he means to marry her, and to sacrifice to her innocence and her attractions all plans of ambition, and all views of aggrandizement:—thrice happy Henrietta, if such is thy prospect of felicity! to have inspired a passion so disinterested, may humble the most insolent of thy superiors, and teach even the wealthiest to envy thee!"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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